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THE DARK SIDE

The Magazine of the Macabre and Fantast



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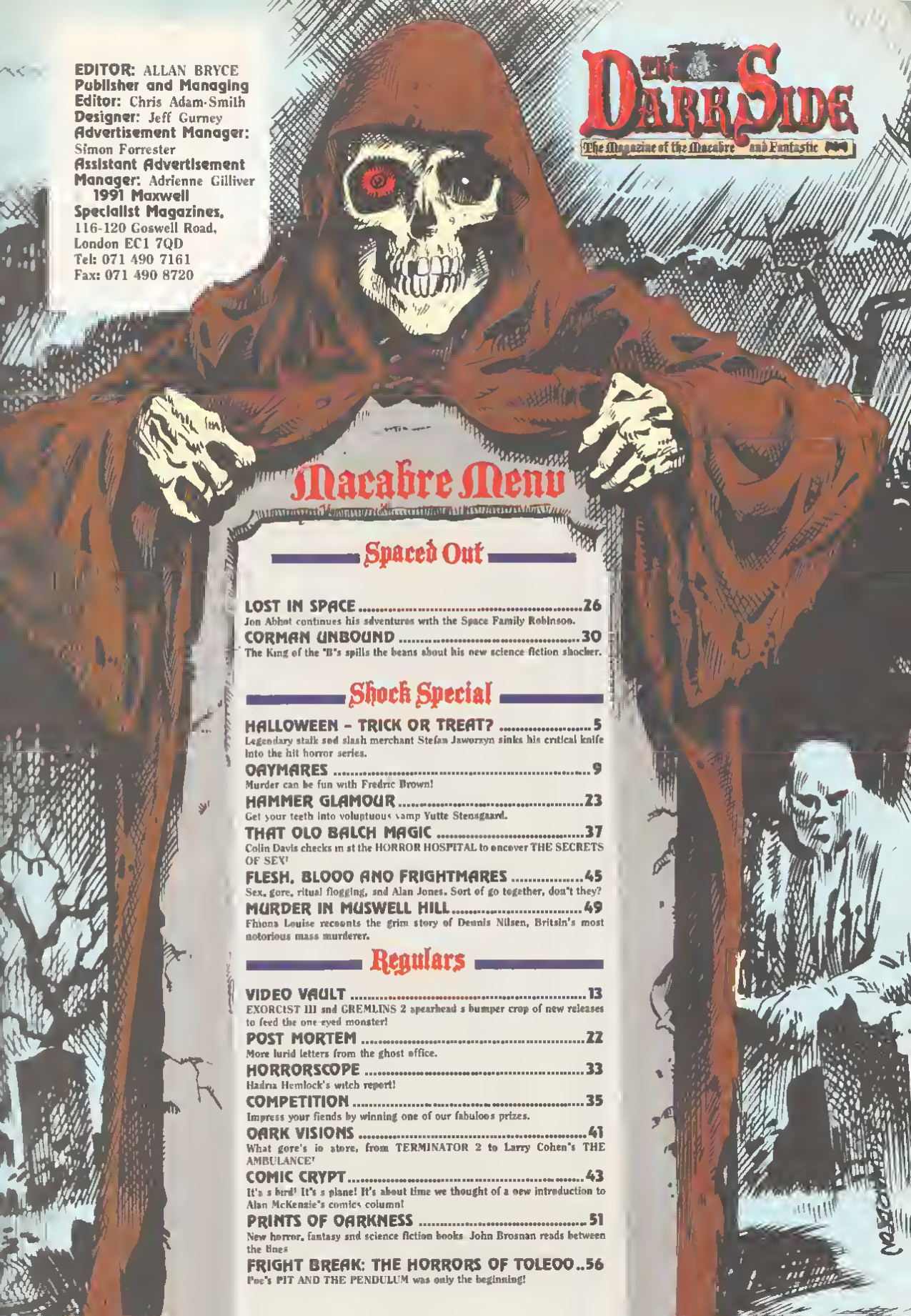




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The Dark Side

The Magazine of the Macabre and Fantastic

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THE DARK SIDE
The Magazine of the Macabre and Fantastic

Introduction

Well here we are again, and as I write these words there's enough horror going on in the world to make the exploits of Freddy and company look pretty tame by comparison. The real monsters of this planet don't go around with razor fingernails and complexions like an overcooked hamburger, but they can cause suffering on a scale that is almost impossible for the human mind to comprehend. Anyway, let us hope that a better, safer world emerges from the debris of all this disaster.

A renowned press cynic once said that a good editor is one who knows how to separate the wheat from the chaff – and then prints the chaff! There's undoubtedly a great deal of truth in that statement, especially in the world of tabloid journalism. But in my book a good editor is someone who, among other more saintly virtues, has a clear vision of the project in hand and is not prepared to compromise that vision. I'll leave others to judge MY editorial competence, but I do have a very clear vision of the way THE DARK SIDE should develop in the months ahead. As a lifelong horror fan I have always wanted to see articles on such unsung heroes of the genre as Norman J. Warren, Herman Cohen, Bert I. Gordan, Armanda D'Ossario and their anonymous ilk, and I hope you think the same way, because that's just what we're going to give you. That's not to say we'll be neglecting the work of current genre superstars like Clive Barker, David Cronenberg and Wes Craven. But we will also be throwing the spotlight on ghoulish golden oldies, from Karloff and Lugosi, to Lee, Price and Cushing. You'll notice that this very issue we present the first part of Alan Jones' exhaustive profile of Pete Walker, the man who gave us such exploitation treats as FRIGHTMARE and THE HOUSE OF WHIPCORD, and Colin Davis delivers an amusing, insightful look at the brief but eventful career of HORROR HOSPITAL director Antony Balch. These are people whose contributions to the genre have gone unrecognised for far too long, and we're pleased to set the record straight.

The results of our reader survey are now being tabulated, and we're immediately acting on your demands to include more book material and video reviews (though the latter will depend on how many vids are actually released in the month in question!) It was encouraging to note that most of the readers who took the trouble to fill in the questionnaire seemed to be ninety percent happy with the magazine as it is. Perhaps I'm not such a bad editor after all...

Finally, a quick word about our OPPORTUNITY SHOCKS 'Make Your Own Horror Movie' competition. For those who missed the entry details, what we want is a shortish horror video (preferably no longer than 20 minutes) that must be all your own work. The grand prize is a brand new Hitachi 'point and shoot' Camcorder worth £700, plus the honour of having your film screened at this year's prestigious SHOCK AROUND THE CLOCK festival. There will also be a goody bag of prizes for the nine runners-up and a special award for 'Best Makeup.' The closing date for entires is 30th of April, and the top ten finalists will be invited to attend a London screening where their work will be judged by such genre celebrities as TROMA boss Lloyd Kaufmann, director Fhiona Louise, and SHOCK XPRESS supremo Stefan Jaworzyn – plus anyone else of importance we can rope in! Please don't forget to make a copy of your tape before sending it off, just in case it gets lost in transit. And include a large, padded SAE if you want it back afterwards. That's about it for now. Enjoy the issue, and let me leave you with a wise message for the warmongers out there: the pen is mightier than the sword – and considerably easier to write with...



Allan Bryce

Contributors for this issue: Alan McKenzie, Stan Nicholls, Stefan Jaworzyn, Jon Abbott, Alan Jones, John Brosnan, Colin Davis, Richard Marshall, Norman Taylor. **Publishing Director** Raymond Lewis. **Managing Director**, Peter Welham. **Production Controller** Jayne Penfold. **Printed and bound by** Carlisle Web Offset, Newton Trading Estate, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 7MR. **Colour and Mono origination** Ebony Liskeard, Cornwall. **News Trade Distributor** IPC Marketforce, Kings Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS. **Subscription Rates** Refer to subs page this issue. **THE DARK SIDE** is published on the 4th Thursday of each month preceding the coverdate. **American Bureau** – Maitland McDonagh
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HALLOWEEN



IS THAT A CARVING KNIFE IN YOUR POCKET OR ARE YOU JUST PLEASED TO SEE ME? Stefan Jaworzyn Investigates the Horrors of the Halloween Series...

Picture this, if you can: a belching, demon toad is about to sock out your brain unless you explain the 'success' of the 'Halloween', 'Nightmare on Elm Street' and 'Friday the 13th' series to him pronto – what do you say? How do you make such offensive, repetitious and uninspired drivel sound rational and appealing? 'Oh, well, they're these *great* films about characterless teenagers being murdered by faceless maniacs...But, um, the faceless killers are almost like heroes - at least, they're only slightly less one-dimensional than the losers they butcher, and, ah, they slaughter the kids in really *inventive* ways...' Around this point Mr Toad would undoubtedly begin his feast...

As of the UK video release of *Halloween 5* the 'Halloween' series had taken over $220 million at the US box office *alone*. During that period we've seen John Carpenter sell the rights and wash his hands of all but the royalties for the continued use of his over-familiar theme music. We've seen screenwriters take their names off pictures. We've seen a stuntman (with a noticeably different build in each episode – by part 5 he's looking positively weedy) in an expressionless mask decimate the adolescent population of Haddonfield.

We've seen crazy old Dr Loomis (portrayed by the seemingly tireless Donald Pleasence) return as often as Michael Myers! We've seen Mr Myers check out the electoral register for the distant relatives of someone who once had sex with his Great Aunt Crackbaggy, then hack 'em to bits. (In part 5 he's desperate – or confused – enough to scissor up the half-sister of his niece. His *niece*! She temporarily halts him by climbing into a coffin and shouting "Uncle!" Honestly.) And, unless I nodded off and missed a key sequence early in the series, we've had less than zero by way of explanation as to why The Shape is "the devil incarnate," although Dennis Etchison, in his pseudonymous novelisation of *Halloween II*, did attempt to rationalise it.

In case you've been fortunate enough to have spent the last decade in the belly of a whale, here are a very few, very basic details of the series. It began in 1978 with John Carpenter's modestly budgeted ($320,000) 'ground-breaking' (the fact that the ground it broke subsequently became about as fertile as a stretch of the Ho Chi Minh trail doused in Agent Orange cannot, realistically, be blamed on Carpenter, can it...?) independent production, *Halloween*, starring Jamie Lee Curtis and the inescapable Donald Pleasence. The first part set up the legend as follows: on Halloween night, 1963, six-year-old Michael Myers stabbed his sister to death after she made love with her boyfriend. Following fifteen years of staring at the walls in the boobyhatch, Mikey-boy (now known as 'the bogeymen' for no apparent reason) escapes, returns to Haddonfield and proceeds to tear up the town and the local teens, most of whom are girls who dress scanty or make out with their dumb boyfriends. The only one he *doesn't* kill is virginal Laurie (Curtis), though he does have a damn good try...

Thus was the morally objectionable premise established and has continued, relatively uninterrupted, until now. And the *really* bad news is that *Halloween 5* looks like it's nowhere near the end of the saga...

If *Halloween* appeared to be built upon a morally dubious premise, it was at least accomplished with some panache, which is more than can be said for the multitude of abysmal stalk and slash atrocities it ushered in. While Carpenter's model at least took some time to introduce its characters before dispatching them, films such as the ever-reliable Joe Zito's *The Prowler* (or whatever the hell it was called in Britain) or George Mihalka's Canadian-made *My Bloody Valentine* (to name but two in a veritable manure heap of titles) were even more simplistic exercises in raising the body count.

And while *The Prowler*, *The Burning*

'I've come for Stefan Jaworzyn'...







Above. Scenes from HALLOWEEN II

and *Friday the 13th* at least had the advantage of showcasing Tom Savini's superb gore effects (though many were truncated by the British censors), the vast majority of slasher movies merely guaranteed acres of wandering around in the woods, old dark houses or dusty cellars before a dope-smoking blockhead or topless bimbo was pounded, punctured or pulverised in a scene almost guaranteed to be cut...

Anyway, whatever the first episode arguably had in the way of style (the razor-sharp editing of Tommy Wallace and Charles Bornstein, Dean Cundey's slick photography and Carpenter's own neat



Pumpkinhead: HALLOWEEN III

synthesizer score) was, even more arguably, lost in the second episode. But what *Halloween II* did have was a higher body count and some much-needed graphic violence, purportedly inserted by Carpenter himself to spice up the lacklustre proceedings.

The 'story' continues straight on from part one and is set in Haddonfield hospital, where Laurie (Curtis, returning along with Pleasence to do battle with the by-now-indestructible Shape) is recovering from mad Michael's initial attack. By the time the film reached its climax one didn't give a hoot *what* the family connection between Laurie and The Shape was...

Well, the years have been kinder to *Halloween II* than many of its contemporaries, and though it maintains a modicum of chills and some acceptable graphic death scenes it's essentially just another hospital killer film, better executed than say, *X-Ray* or *Visiting Hours*, but lacking their compulsive sleaze quotient.

Even if *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* were not a good movie in its own right, it would tower above the others in the series simply for the fact that it's not a knife-kill time-waster. Forget Nigel Kneale's endless complaints about how 'they' ruined his precious script: *Halloween III* is a fine mutation of ancient magic and computer-age paranoia with an eerie atmosphere and great effects, marred only by the wooden acting of Tom Atkins and Stacey Nelkin. It's a dark, brooding picture, with a genuinely inspired plot, a



HALLOWEEN II – Double Tops!

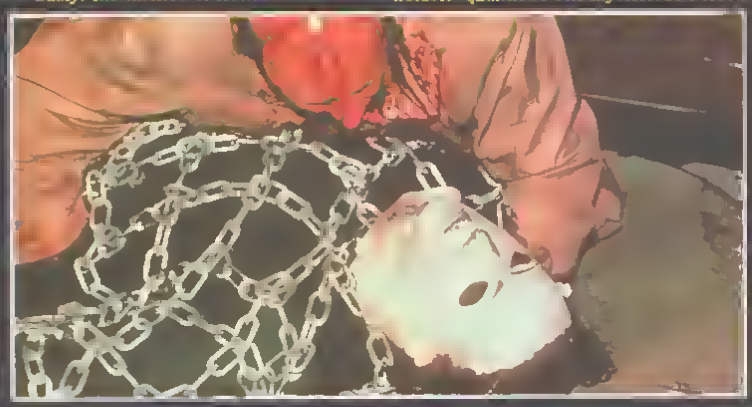
sinister performance by Dan O'Herlihy and the best soundtrack of the series. Kneele felt 'they' had betrayed his original concepts so thoroughly that he had his name removed from the finished product. But then Kneale has so few positive words for virtually everyone he's worked with in the cinema industry that it might cause an uncharitable person to raise an eyebrow, or even two... Whatever, it's an intriguing movie with a nice eting in its tail and can easily stand repeated viewing – though not in the original video version, wherein all the effects footage was excised!

Sadly, the makers of *Halloween 4 The Return of Michael Myers* chose to pursue more tedious ends, and lo! Michael Myers did return! Bet you never noticed he'd gone, did you? By this point Carpenter and Hill's involvement had all but vanished – Dennis Etchison had written a script for Carpenter, but the 'Halloween' property was sold to Mouetapha Akkad and the script was never produced. Instead, Dwight Little was eppointed to direct a script by Alan B. McElroy, and part 4 carried on regardless.

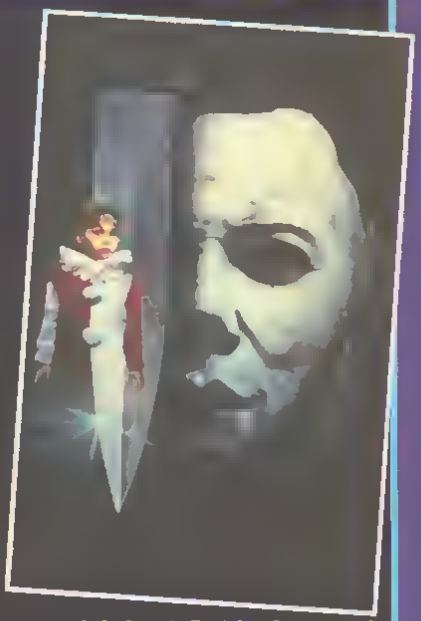
A more uninepiring mass is difficult to envisage: Crazy Doc Loomis was back from the dead, raving like e loon, and Michael Myers, judged harmless after a billion years in eolitary, escapes to carve up Haddoufield aud its feehle-minded residents agaio. The only redeeming sequence in the whole film ie the opening credils, atmospherically ehot in autumnal hues. The rest is silence.

With hardly a moment's pause came *Halloween 5*, directed by Dominique Othenio-Girard. A woman, prasumebly, leading one to speculate that perhaps a new perspective might be forthcoming, that the film-makers might exercise a tad more imagination, might even introduce some kind of feminist nonsense into the proceedinge. No chance. *Halloween 5*, if not *quite* the nadir of the series (thet's a qusetion I wouldn't really cara to ponder, to be brutally frank), comes alarmingly close in more than one instance. Perhaps its moet lamentable sequence occure when two obligatory 'make out and die' losers are groping in a barn. The girl tells her dumb hunk boyfriend they can't do 'it' because they have no protection. Grinning dopily, Hunk whips out a condom. But even safe sex won't save these two clowns: The Shape shows up with his pitchfork and it's ventilation time!

Othenin-Girerd's directorial technique exhiblts more flair than Little's, but the lame storyline, video-clip art direction and predictable subjective camsrawork conspire to sink the project from the outset. Pleasence's 'acting' now conaists entirely of purteulous mumbling elternating with rages and bellowing – his "Diel Diel Die!" rant as he batters The Shape with a 2 x 4 at the climax is a classic of its kind – but it's one of the film's only notable 'qualitie'. The myeterioue Person in Black who creeps and skulks suspicioualy but whose presence is never explained ie the other item of vague interest, though a sura end depressing eign of another episode iu the offiug...It would be a pleasent surprise to eee Othenin-Girard given a free hand next time, particularly in the area of the script, but il seems unlikely Formula is formula: il hasn't changed lu the unspeakable 'Nightmera on Elm Street' series, nor, needless to say, iu the 'Friday the 13th', and if mindless repetition is good enough for them, why should 'Halloween' depart from the norm? It's a pity that with a proven money-making series the producers era unwilling to take a few risks and strive for the occasional bout of originality, bul hell – the 'Halloween' series didn't get whera it is today through a surfeit of great ideas...



HALLOWEEN 5. Donald Pleasence unchained!



HALLOWEEN. USA 1978. Dir: Johu Carpenter. P: Debra Hill. Scr: Carpenter & Hill. With: Donald Pleasence, Jamie Lee Curtis, Nancy Loomis. Chauuel 5 Video

HALLOWEEN II. USA 1981. Dir Rick Rosenthal. Scr & P: John Carpenter & Debra Hill. With: Jamie Lee Curtie, Donald Pleasence. Caetle Video

HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH. USA 1983. Dir & Scr. Tommy Les Wallace. P: John Carpenter & Debra Hill. With: Tom Atkins, Stacey Nelkin. Warner Video

HALLOWEEN 4 THE RETURN OF MICHAEL MYERS. USA 1988. Dir. Dwight Little. P: Paul Freemae. Scr: Alan B. McElroy. With: Donald Pleasence, Ellie Cornell. Braveworld Video

HALLOWEEN 5. USA 1990. Dir Dominique Othenin-Girard. P: Ramsey Thomas. Scr Michael Jacohs, Dominique Othenin-Girard. Shem Bittermen. With: Donald Pleasence. Caplial Video.



Pleasence as Sam Loomis

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DAYMARES

Stan Nicholls profiles the mad, bad universe of Fredric Brown

In the distant future, humanity occupies a vast galactic empire, and a giant computer is built to link its billions of inhabited worlds. Asked, 'Is there a God?' the machine replies, 'There is now.'

The story is so well known it almost has the status of a joke. In fact it was a classic piece of short-short fiction [QUESTION, 1954] from the fertile, offbeat imagination of Fredric Brown.

Outside a growing core audience, Brown's name remains less well known than his stories. These tend to be passed around verbally, as kind of science fiction urban myths; the sort of thing you tell people who have never read a word of the stuff.

Fred Brown was a one-off. Robert Sheckley, Kurt Vonnegut, Douglas Adams – virtually every humorous fabulist – owes a debt of gratitude to him. His quirky, hilarious tales gained him a cult following, with readers eagerly devouring his every word; and he wrote with equal proficiency in the SF, horror and mystery fields.

Each of his tightly-knit stories contained at least one good IDEA. A man discovers invisibility, but is killed by a guard when he creeps into a Sultan's harem at





night, because everyone is invisible in the dark; a sloppy geometry student, not knowing the difference between a pentagram and a hexagram, is taken by the Devil; the last two vampires seek refuge in a future peopled by sentient turnips...

Born in Cincinatti on 29th October 1906, Fredric William Brown held down a mundane office job between 1924 and 1936, before joining the MILWAUKEE JOURNAL for an eleven year stint as a journalist. Armed with the skills learnt there, he became a full-time freelance writer in 1947, although his debut short story had appeared in 1941 (NOT YET THE END for CAPTAIN FUTURE magazine.) He won the Mystery Writers of America's prestigious Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1948 for his novel THE FABULOUS CLIPJOINT.

The 'Fabulous Clipjoint' is Chicago, reflecting the hero's ambiguous view of the city's respectable and seamy sides. This sort of paradox characterised much of the author's later work. The novel, described by leading crime editor Anthony Boucher as 'sordidly compelling', remained Brown's personal favourite until his death, and introduced his amateur private eye team Ed and Am Hunter.

A stream of other lucid mysteries followed, the best known probably being THE SCEAMING MIMI (1949), in which a reporter hunts a ruthless slasher murderer. An allegory of the 'Beauty and the Beast' theme, it confounded expectations – a Brown speciality – by ultimately apportioning evil intent to both killer and intended victim.

THE DEEP END starts with the horrific death of a young boy, crushed under the wheels of a roller coaster, and presents a detective as mentally disturbed in his way as the psychopath he is up against. KNOCK THREE-ONE-TWO highlights the dilemma of a travelling salesman, and compulsive gambler, who chances to learn the identity of a crazed mass-murderer. Superbly, Brown keeps the reader ignorant of who this may be until the end.

In THE LENIENT BEAST, a police procedural, the quarry is a self-proclaimed 'mercy' killer. THE FAR CRY, an ambitious effort in terms of style and structure, has one of mystery fiction's most unexpected endings, and piles on the horror with an adroitness Stephen King would be proud of.

His crime books alone assure Brown a place in any objective history of popular entertainment, but it is for his ingenious fantasies that he is mostly remembered, and which he once said he sometimes wrote as a counterpoint to the 'too real' aspects of his mystery fiction.



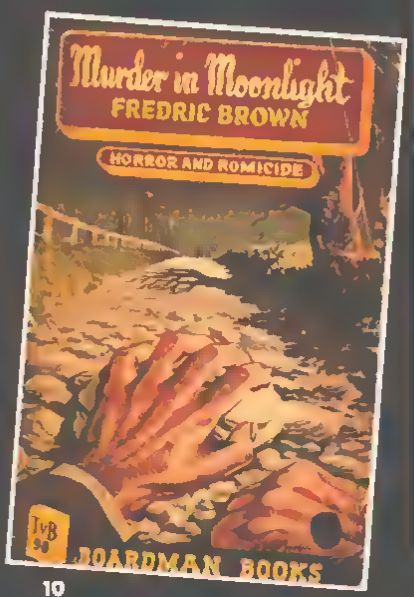


The first collection of such shorts, SPACE ON MY HANDS, published in 1951, established his reputation for eccentricity and inventiveness. It was at this point that he began to turn out a series of gems, like QUESTION, which have become genre cliches. And to say they are now cliches is not a criticism, but a compliment to Brown's ability to generate such powerfully enduring ideas, as he proved in HONEYMOON IN HELL, DAYMARES, PARADOX LOST, NIGHTMARES AND GEEZENSTACKS and his other collections.

Some writers have the rare knack of producing stories whose completeness gives them a timeless quality; stories that make other writers, say 'Why didn't I think of that?' Brown's possession of this talent puts him firmly in the tradition of O'Henry, Saki and Jack London.

An instance of this is his story ARENA (1944), where the fate of the human race depends on one-on-one combat between a man and an alien warrior. ARENA was voted one of the best SF stories of all time by the Science Fiction Writers of America in 1970. The many derivations of the idea since it appeared, in fiction, films and TV (including a television version of ARENA for STAR TREK) obscures how fresh it must have seemed when originally published. Brown's genius rested on being able to come up with notions that immediately became part of science fiction and fantasy folklore.

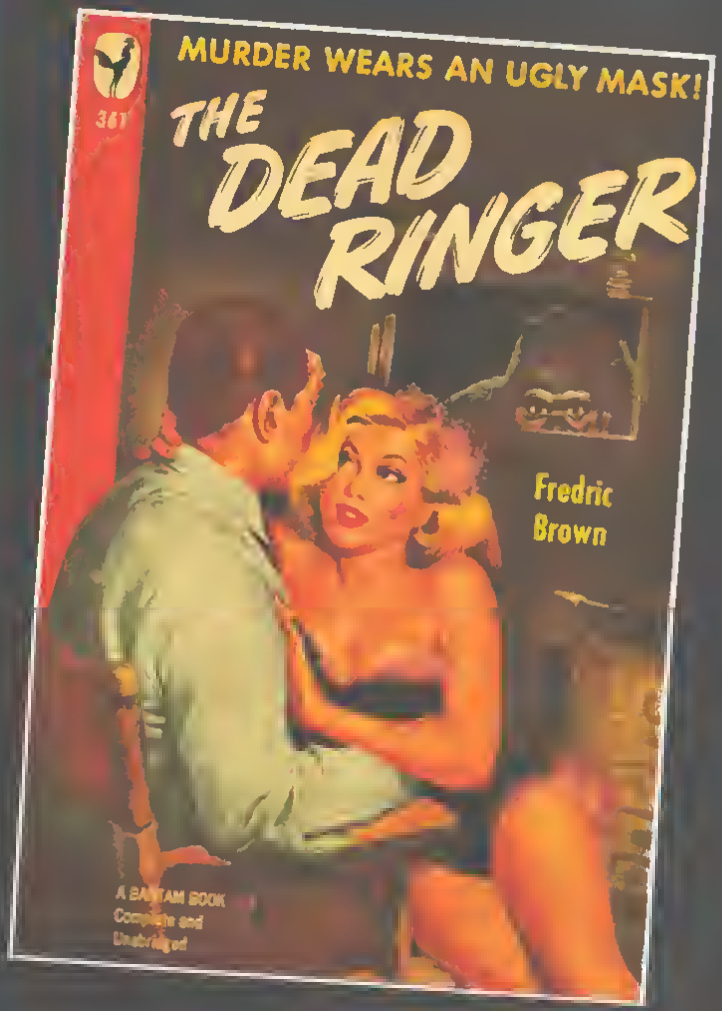
But some of his stories were so quintessentially his own they could never be 'adapted' by anyone else. This is particularly true of his short-short pieces, many of which depend on tortuous puns for their kickers. In TOO FAR (1955), for instance, a witch turns a man into a deer, and refuses to turn him back because she 'wants to keep the first buck she ever made.'



He revitalised staple science fiction devices like time travel and immortality. The scientist in FIRST TIME MACHINE invites his three friends to see his invention. One uses it to kill his own grandfather. The scientist invites his two friends to see his invention... A variation has an experiment which makes time run backwards – the second half of the story is the first half printed back to front, a true innovation for its day.

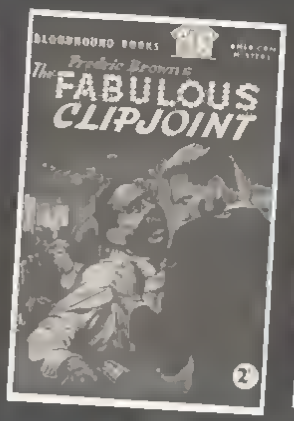
In another tale, immortality is discovered by a Russian during the time of Stalin. He takes the serum just as a severe bout of flu sets in. Unable to cure his perpetual fever, or kill him, the authorities simply have him buried.

Many of the stories have added impact because, like the example above, the lightness of tone is contrasted with a streak of sheer malevolence. A few display only the dark side of Brown's vision. COME AND GO MAD, set in a mental institution, mocks the concept of free will and self-determination, painting a harrowing picture of human despair and futility. Tellingly, the stories lacking humour or neat twists tended to be the least satisfying.

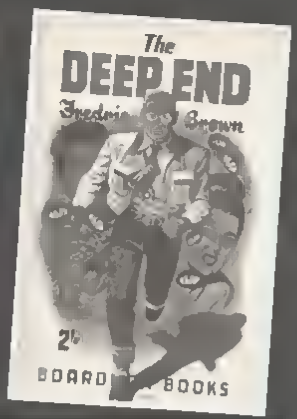


Brown was a master of the short form, but his fantasy and SF novels, while generally somewhat less accomplished and prone to date more obviously, certainly have merit. His first, WHAT MAD UNIVERSE, features a science fiction writer hurled into an alternate world of his greatest fan's making. The book not only works as zany knockabout farce; it also satirises and subverts a number of science fiction









literature's most cherished conventions.

With ROGUE IN SPACE – whose echoes can be found in Harry Harrison's STAINLESS STEEL RAT series and elsewhere – Brown presents a protagonist, Crag, with a persona as complex as any of his mystery story heroes. Crag, good guy and criminal simultaneously, is forced to help create a new planet untainted by corruption in order to resolve his own internal conflict.

THE MIND THING has an alien stranded far from home, and attempting to return using its ability to possess human minds as stepping stones. The twist is that this is fatal to its hosts. His 1955 novel, MARTIANS, GO HOME, is one of the most memorable. Hordes of little green men appear and proceed to drive everyone crazy with their inquisitiveness. Typically, Brown makes them pests, rather than the more obviously menacing alien invaders in vogue in 50s science fiction. Finally, the SF writer whose imagination may have brought them into being wishes them gone, and they vanish.

Brown also turned out teleplays for ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS, and adapted several stories for THE TWILIGHT ZONE. He wrote one mainstream novel – THE OFFICE – drawing on his experiences as a clerk in Cincinatti, but even here included an element of mystery. A single, and not entirely successful, juvenile, MITKEY ASTRONOUSE, appeared in 1971. He died in March of the following year.

Brown's legacy was to raise the supershort fantasy to the status of minor art, bringing genuine wit and startling climaxes to the form. He brought off with elegant panache that most difficult of all sub-genres, the SF satire. Some of his work, principally the mysteries, is available from specialist presses; the scandal is that no major publishing house in this country currently has any of his books in print.

Brown's expertise and economy of style remain enviable, his stories hooking the reader from their first line. Who can resist the opening of SENTRY, for instance? 'He was wet and muddy and hungry and cold and he was fifty thousand light-years from home.'

It's time Fredric Brown was brought in from the cold.

FREDRIC BROWN PROFILE – ADDENDUM: BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Crm) = Crime; (Sf/f) = Science fiction/fantasy; (M) = Mainstream; (J) = Juvenile.

Novels

1947: The Fabulous Clipjoint (Crm)
1948: The Dead Ringer (Crm)
1948: Murder Can Be Fun [UK: A Plot for Murder] (Crm)
1949: The Bloody Moonlight [UK: Murder by Moonlight] (Crm)
1949: The Screaming Mimi (Crm)
1949: What Mad Universe (Sf/f)
1950: Compliments of a Fiend (Crm)
1950: Here Comes a Candle (Crm)
1950: Night of the Jabberwock (Crm)
1951: The Case of the Dancing Sandwiches (Crm)
1951: Death Has Many Doors (Crm)
1951: The Far Cry (Crm)
1952: The Deep End (Crm)
1952: We All Killed Grandma (Crm)
1953: Madball (Crm)
1953: The Lights in the Sky are Stars [UK: Project Jupiter] (Sf/f)
1954: His Name Was Death (Crm)
1955: The Wench is Dead (Crm)
1955: Martians, Go Home (Sf/f)
1956: The Lenient Beast (Crm)
1957: Rogue in Space (Sf/f)
1958: One for the Road (Crm)
1958: The Office (M)
1959: Knock Three-One-Two (Crm)
1959: The Late Lamented (Crm)
1961: The Murderers (Crm)
1961: The Mind Thing (Sf/f)
1963: The Five-Day Nightmare (Crm)
1963: Mrs Murphy's Underpants (Crm)
1971: Mitkey Astronouse (J)

Short Story Collections

1851: Space on My Hands (Sf/f)
1953: Mostly Murder: Eighteen Stories (Crm)
1954: Angels and Spaceships [Variant title: Star Shine] (Sf/f)
1958: Honeymoon in Hell (Sf/f)
1961: Nightmares and Geezenstacks (Sf/f-Crm)
1963: The Shaggy Dog and Other Murders (Crm)
1968: Daymares (Sf/f)
1973: Paradox Lost (Sf/f)
1977: The Best of Fredric Brown [Edited by Robert Bloch] (Sf/f)
1982: The Best Short Stories of Fredric Brown (Sf/f-Crm)
1987: And the Gods Laughed (Sf/f-Crm)

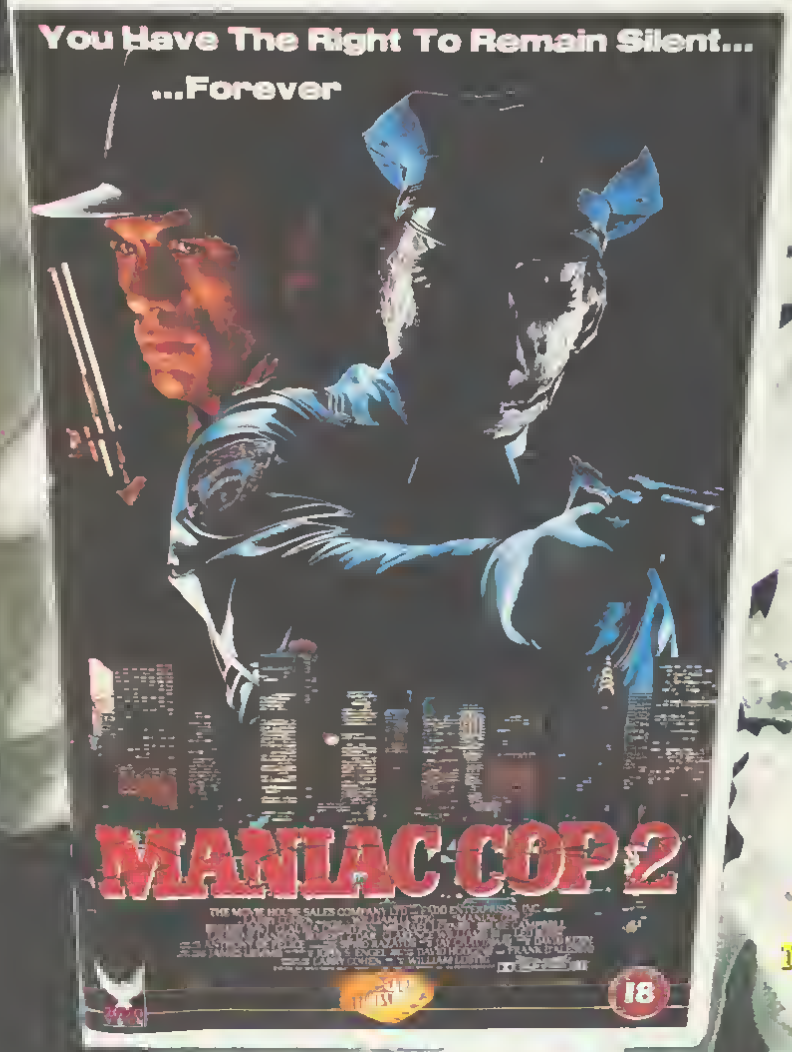
As Editor

1953: Science Fiction Carnival [With Mack Reynolds]

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*** good
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* poor





STEPFATHER 2: MAKE ROOM FOR DADDY

Virgin Video

**½

The last time we saw the Stepfather he had been fatally shot and stabbed But, like HALLOWEEN s Michael Myers it takes more than a few mortal wounds to get rid of Terry O Quinn s predatory patriarch The inevitable sequel opens with O Quinn fully recovered and locked up in a high security psychiatric hospital – but not for long Entering the office of a trusting shrink he exhibits a beautifully crafted model home complete with a doddy figurine When the psychiatrist's back is turned he plunges the figure into his neck

Before you know it O Quinn is out of the booby hatch and setting up home in the idyllic family community of Palm Meadows under the assumed identity of psychiatrist Dr Gene Clifford All he needs to make life complete is his own little family and he thinks he has found one in the shape of pretty divorcee Meg Foster (who has a teenage son) First of all though he has to get rid of Foster s troublesome ex-husband who has realised the error of his ways and wants her back and a nosy postal worker who wonders why O Quinn never gets any personal mail Of course as the bodies pile up so Foster becomes increasingly suspicious And on the eve of the big day she realises that her wedding march could very well end up as a dance of death

O Quinn s perceptive performance is easily the best thing about this by-the-numbers sequel (which is really nothing more than an inferior remake of the original) It s entertaining enough but looks cheap lacks suspense and doesn t bother to tell us anything new about the Stepfather s origins or even take him off in a new direction Having said that director Jeff Burr (CHAINSAW 3) does get quite a bit of mileage out of the crowd-pleasing grand guignol climax which hacks to pieces every clichéd wedding scene in Hollywood history



Peter Cushing

What s next I wonder STEPFATHER MEETS ZSA ZSA GABOR?
Certificate 18 Running Time 86 minutes
R.M

FRANKENSTEIN CREATED WOMAN

Castle Pictures

**½

The fourth of Hammer s Frankenstein series originally released in 1967 sees Peter Cushing s bad baron dabbling in spiritual areas transplanting the soul of an executed young man into the disfigured body of the man s female lover (who committed suicide after her beau was killed) Cushing then performs plastic surgery and turns the ugly girl into Susan Denberg (Playboy's Miss August 1966!) after which she goes out to seduce and murder those who brought about her/his unjust execution The last Hammer horror made at Bray studios has a mediocre script by Anthony Hinds (under the pseudonym of John Elder) and plodding direction by the usually reliable Terence Fisher But these shortcomings are made up for by the usual impressive Hammer production gloss and a solid performance from Cushing The title was a pun on the Brigitte Bardot/Roger Vadim sex opus AND GOD CREATED WOMAN
Certificate 18 Running Time 86 minutes
A.B.

RASPUTIN – THE MAD MONK

Castle Pictures

If you thought that Jason and Freddy were hard to kill take a look at what Chris Lee goes through in the final scenes of this colourful 1966 Hammer horror Lee is in fine fettle as the evil debauched bearded monk of the last Czarist regime A man of almost supernatural powers he uses hypnotism to gain entry to the Court of the Czar His enemies plot to dispose of him with poisoned food and lethal injections but this proves to be a far more difficult task than they had imagined This is more of a horror flick than a slice of true-life history, we get to see hands chopped off and acid chucked in people s faces If it plays like a Dracula movie that s because the same sets cast and crew were employed the same year for DRACULA – PRINCE OF DARKNESS A good effort and well worth collecting though the Cinemascope camerawork will suffer on video
Certificate 18 Running Time 92 minutes
A.B.



Chris Lee – as Rasputin

THE VENGEANCE OF SHE
Castle Pictures
*½

John Richardson and Olinka Berova are a poor substitute for Chris Lee and Ursula Andress in this misbegotten cheapie sequel to Hammer's big budget fantasy SHE (1965). This time out the king of the lost city of Kumo (Richardson) discovers that the beautiful Berova is a dead ringer for his lost queen Ayesha so he puts a spell on her to entice her to Kumo. Edward Judd is Berova's heroic boyfriend who sets out to rescue her from a fate worse than further sequels. Nobody takes vengeance on anyone. In fact it's pretty boring stuff throughout and though Berova is stunning to look at she has less acting ability than a box of Kleenex.

Certificate PG Running Time 101 minutes
A B

TERROR AT THE OPERA
Virgin Video

Made in 1987 and only now getting a release on video TERROR AT THE OPERA is a truncated version of Dario Argento's OPERA a film that seems to have acquired almost legendary status despite the fact that hardly anyone (apart from Alan Jones!) has managed to see a complete uncut version of it. Catching up with the movie at last one wonders what all the fuss was about. The film is certainly commercial enough to make Orion's reluctance to release it seem foolish. But it's also pretty silly in places. We all love dear Dario but one has to admit that his skill with the camera far exceeds his talent as a scriptwriter. Put simply the plot that holds this movie's dazzling grand guignol murder sequences together is as shaky as Lord Lucan's alibi.

In fact it's basically a spaghetti re-run of PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. During a rehearsal for a new production of Verdi's Macbeth (a work usually associated with bad luck) the production's highly-strung diva storms off the set and is struck down and injured by a passing motor vehicle outside the opera house. The lead role of Lady Macbeth is then offered to pretty young understudy Betty (Cristina Marsillach) who quickly earns the plaudits of the critics. She also attracts the attention of a masked psycho who has a few eye-opening performances of his own to stage.

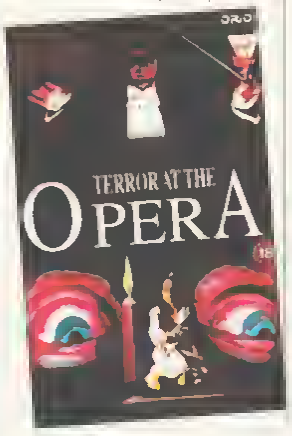
Abducting her the nutcase binds the girl and pins her eyes open in best CLOCKWORK ORANGE fashion as he forces her to watch the ruthless slaughter of her closest friends. Realising that the murderer's actions tie in with her own foggy recurrent night-



mare Betty enlists the aid of the show's director (CHARIOTS OF FIRE's Ian Charleson) and a malevolent flock of ravens to uncover the killer's true identity.

Maybe I missed something but the killer's motives made no sense at all to me and neither did the daft climax set in picturesque SOUND OF MUSIC territory (I wouldn't have been at all surprised to see Julie Andrews stumbling over a hilltop with a knife in her throat!). Argento's full two hour plus version supposedly made things much clearer. But let's face it it has became a bit of a cliche for Argento fans to witter on about how much of a masterpiece the maestro's last movie was before the censor managed to get his axe in. My guess is that the judicious cutting has actually improved the film's overall entertainment value while only slightly harming the gore scenes which are still the best part of the show even in this cut version.

The best of these has actually been left completely intact by the British censor a stunning bullet-through-the eye sequence which is presaged by an (OMEN inspired?) slow-motion shot of the projectile travelling down the barrel of a revolver and boring through a door's peephole. Other gory deaths include the hacking open of a girl's throat to retrieve a swallowed piece of evidence and a brutal stabbing



more of a similar experience from her past. Betty enlists the aid of the show's director (CHARIOTS OF FIRE's Ian Charleson) and a malevolent flock of ravens to uncover the killer's true identity.

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Gory deaths aside Argento dresses his handsome production up with lots of shawy Loumo Crone camerawork swooping round the rafters with a flock of ravens and homing in for a closeup of the maniac's pulsating grey matter. He also overloads the soundtrack with everything from Prokofiev to headbanging heavy metal. But as often happens when style overwhelms content it's impossible to get caught up in the storyline or care about the fate of the poorly sketched characters. Nobody would contest Argento's ability to produce memorable images but it would be nice if occasionally he could manage to integrate them in a decent plot. Either that or perhaps he should go the whole hog and do SUSPIRIA II.

Certificate 18 Running Time 91 minutes
A B



SPACED INVADERS
Meduso Home Video
**

Fredric Brown's hilarious spoof novel MARTIANS GO HOME could very well have been the uncredited inspiration behind this amiable kiddie comedy about a bunch of inept little green Martians out to kick some earthling butt who get more than they bargained for when they crash land in the small backwoods town of Big Bean Illinois. Mistakenly intercepting a Halloween night fiftieth anniversary broadcast of Orson Welles historical radio reading of WAR OF THE WORLDS the midget group divert their ship to Earth to join a non-existent Martino invasion where they are mistaken for costumed children and get into all manner of fairly predictable slapstick scrapes.

The Martians have names like Dipro Giggywig Ziploc and Spiff and they look so daft it's small wonder their cries of Prepare to die Earth scum! are met with stony indifference by the redneck locals. The film as a whole provokes roughly the same reaction. After a promising start which includes some effective sight gags and impressive special effects the movie crashes to earth rather rapidly degenerating into an endless series of witless slapstick encounters connected by an ever more incoherent storyline. The ankle biters may get some fun out of it but oldsters who can cut up their own food will probably want to watch something more adult – like THUNDERBIRDS.

Certificate U Running Time 95 minutes
N T



Blue Steel – Jamie Lee Curtis plays Dirty Harry

BLUE STEEL
First Independent
**½

Twelve years on from HALLOWEEN poor Jamie Lee Curtis is still having to defend herself from the unwanted attentions of indescribible loonies BLUE STEEL is a cool stalk and slosh movie masquerading as a feminist cop flicker and though the film delivers plenty of stylish imagery its humdrum plotline is strictly from the bottom of the B movie barrel

Looking ever more butch with every film appearance Jamie plays bright-as-a-button rookie Megan Turner who jokingly explains to a colleague that she joined the force because I want to shoot people She gets her chance rather more quickly than she might have expected when on her first night out on patrol she is forced to gun down an armed supermarket robber In the confusion following the incident the robber's weapon is picked up by one of the shoppers a slick commodities broker named Eugene Hunt (Ron Silver) Hunt is a psycho gun fetishist who also has a thing about very butch ladies Boy is this HIS lucky night!

From there on in he starts randomly plugging people in the street with bullets that have Megan's name inscribed on them He also contrives to become romantically involved with her though it has to be said that their relationship takes a turn for the worse when he shyly confesses that he counts serial killing among his major hobbies She snaps the handcuffs on him (another favourite fetish?) but in a twist familiar to DIRTY HARRY fans nothing can be proved against Silver even though everyone knows he's as guilty as hell Of course it is then left to Curtis to restore the status quo in a grisly Peckinpah-like shootout on the streets of New York

Vividly shot in a deliberately stylish fashion by NEAR DARK's Kathryn Bigelow the movie has a number of quality action set pieces and very good performances from Curtis Silver and HIGHLANDER's Clancy Brown (in a good guy role for a change) It's let down by a ridiculously contrived script (by Bigelow and Eric Red) that's fatally lacking in both humour and believability Bigelow's aim seems to have been to emphasise the mythical erotic beauty of the gun (In the opening credits her camera tracks lovingly across the sleek curves of a Smith and Wesson) But because the plot and characters never seem as interesting as the weapons on display she misses her target audience by a mile

Certificate 18. Running Time 102 minutes
A B.

COMMUNION
First Independent
**½

A close encounter of the dullest possible kind this pretentious load of claptrap is based on Whitley Strieber's supposedly factual novel about how a personal visit from bizarre alien creatures helped cure him of writer's block Unfortunately it also encouraged him to write this movie As played in spiky-haired zombie mode by Christopher Walken Strieber is a successful author with an attractive wife (Lindsay Crouse) a precocious son and a bad case of verbal constipation Trying to unwind with friends at a country cabin he's understandably perplexed when the retreat is flooded with blazing white lights things start to go bump in the night and he blacks out into a coma (like the audience)

After hightailing it back to New York he becomes increasingly more neurotic and paranoid What could have happened in the brightly lit boondocks? Well it is soon revealed that spindly-armed aliens clad in robes carried Whitley off to their space lab for scientific experimentation and testing wiping his mind of all memory of the event afterwards

Whether you believe this to be actually true or just think that Whitley fell asleep eating a cheese sandwich and watching Close Encounters on the telly (the aliens DO look remarkably like the ETs to be found in Spielberg's movie) COMMUNION is still a confused and boring movie Under the laboured direction of Philipe Mora (who gave us HOWLING II and III) the narrative dots about all over the place working forwards and backwards to the climax at the same time

In the end the film comes across as a limp propaganda piece for the already-converted All the characters talk in support-group cliches and the whole boring shapeless mess plays like a self-help film that suggests outer space trolls as bath cause and cure for neuraticism If those aliens really did travel all that way just to break Strieber's writer's block then we're all in a lot of trouble when they come back to collect their share of the film rights

Certificate 15. Running Time 101 minutes
R M





THE FLASH
Warner Home Video
**½

The pilot episode of a colourful new fantasy series based on the adventures of the popular D C Comics hero this emerges as somewhat fleeter of foot than one might expect thanks mainly to some nifty special effects and a pleasantly tongue-in-cheek script (more cute than campy) by the TRANCERS team of Paul De Meo and Danny Bilson

Newcomer John Wesley Shipp plays forensic scientist Barry Allen who gets struck by a lightning bolt and thereafter discovers he has the ability to run fast enough to break the sound barrier (which with the rising cost of petrol is not a talent to be scoffed at) Pretty research scientist Amanda Pays helps Barry to learn to control his powers Then when his police commissioner brother (the reliable Tim Thomerson) is killed by a STREETS OF FIRE-type motorcycle gang that is terrorising the city Barry adapts the guise of The Flash and slips into a fetching full-length red costume (complete with built-in biceps and pectorals) to bring the killers to justice

Audiences are almost certainly going to chuckle at the speedy special effects, even though they are well realised But a lively script makes sure we laugh WITH the movie as well I can't believe it was over so quickly says Barry's girlfriend as they lie in bed together Yeah he replies turning off the boxing match they have been watching on the telly Imagine paying 20 bucks for a fight that's finished in two rounds

The show is set in the present day but its set design offers an interesting collision of styles Amanda's lab has a colourful 60s feel while the prison breakout that furnishes the film's climax seems modelled on 40s film noir Technical credits are spot on from the luminous camerawork to Danny Elfman's rousing theme On the acting side Pays is terrible as usual Shipp is bland but likeable and Michael Nader doesn't make as much of an impact as he should playing the nasty leader of the sanitised biker gang Still on the whole it's a good effort and bodes well for the series to come

Certificate PG Running Time 90 minutes
N T

I BOUGHT A VAMPIRE MOTORCYCLE
Braveworld Video

It's cheering to find a horror spoof that is actually both funny and scary and the event is doubly worthy of celebration when that horror spoof turns out to be British in origin Written and produced by an enterprising pair of former Central Television editors (who apparently got the inspiration after a backstage meeting with Sam Raimi) this snappy little effort tells of how dozy motorcycle courier Noddy (Neil Morrissey) buys a Norton Commando at a knock-down price Taking it home he is somewhat perturbed to discover that it refuses to be wheeled out of the garage until darkness has fallen and takes off like a thing from hell when he orders prawn balls seasoned with garlic from the local Chinese takeaway

In fact as we already know from the opening scenes the machine has figured prominently in a satanic ritual and now possesses the ability to take off of its own accord spouting telescopic spikes and blades to scythe into unwary pedestrians While doubtless appreciating the bike's ability to run on blood (which is a lot cheaper than petrol in these troubled times) Noddy becomes increasingly alarmed about his no-claims bonus as it decapitates a motorcycle gang called The Road Toads chews the leg from a traffic warden chases a prostitute down a dark alley and terrorises his girlfriend The only thing to do is call in an exorcist who duly arrives in the shape of two-fisted sidecar-riding cleric Anthony Daniels and says grimly Right – let's kick some bottom!

Smartly shot on unusual Birmingham locations the film reunites much of the cast of TV's BOON (Neil Morrissey is Rocky in the show and Michael Elphick turns in a nice cameo as the plodding garlic-eating Inspector Cleaver) Sophisticated it ain't We get leering shots of Noddy's girlfriend's bum and boobs as seen from the pov of the bike's headlamps and a typical example of the film's CARRY ON style repartee can be found in the bit where Noddy is asked by the Inspector to check out a dead body and replies Yeah I'll have a butcher's Cleaver

Elsewhere the filmmakers seem to have been heavily influenced by THE YOUNG ONES particularly in a disgustingly hilarious dream sequence involving a talking turd! But they also play it straight and deliver some good shivers as well Apart from one misjudged sequence in the middle (a poorly choreographed pub fight between Noddy and the Road Toads) this is consistently entertaining throughout blending the best of lowbrow British humour with some great gore effects from the Image Imagination stable It's even got a guest appearance by DARK SIDE reviewer Alan Frank Take Norman Tebbit's advice Get on your bike and rent it!

Certificate 18 Running Time 90 minutes
A B





George C. Scott – with a hangover

THE EXORCIST III
CBS Fox Video
**½

Here's an interesting new concept: a horror movie where most of the horror is in the dialogue, where people TALK about nasty things happening but we don't actually get to see much. Could it catch on? From the movie's lack of boxoffice success, I doubt it. Fans of the original EXORCIST will no doubt be disappointed to discover that Linda Blair's head-spinning antics have been replaced by the eyeball-rolling of George C. Scott (who must surely now regret giving that Oscar back for PATTON). Scott plays a Shakespeare-quoting Washington detective on the trail of a serial killer whose act includes cutting off his victim's head and replacing it with that of a statue of Christ (which probably makes the charge murder and first-degree vandalism combined).

The odd thing is that the slaying follow the same MO as that of The Gemini Killer, a psycho who got the hot seat 15 years earlier on exactly the same day that Father Damien Karras (Jason Miller) took a swan dive out of Linda Blair's window. A few of the victims are also connected to the Exorcism case, like Scott's best pal Father Dyer (Ed Flanders) whose headless body is discovered tucked up in a hospital bed with every drop of his blood arranged in neat jars on the nightstand. Could Dr Phibes be behind this?

The second half of the movie is set mainly within the dark, gloomy Bedlam-like hospital where the murder takes place and gives writer/director William Peter Blatty (a former comedy writer who scripted the Peter Sellers hit A SHOT IN THE DARK!) the chance to construct some jolting shock sequences. Best is a suspenseful scene observed in Hitchcockian fashion by a static mid-distance camera, where an unfortunate nurse pays a dreadful price for not looking behind her while checking on the patients! The long dialogues between Scott and the maniac in the basement who may or may not be the killer (a good performance by Brad Dourif) pack quite a punch also.

Ignoring the abysmal EXORCIST II – THE HERETIC, this casts itself as the only true sequel to the original movie, and it does indeed play that way. In adopting his own novel LEGION to the screen, Blatty has opted for atmosphere rather than gory incident. He has certainly been successful in conjuring up a feeling of mounting dread. But his refusal to play by the sequel rules and give punters more of what they enjoyed in the first picture resulted in Fox executives adding a daft exorcism sequence to the climax, completely fracturing the sinister mood and making a nonsense of what has gone before. Nevertheless, for all its faults this emerges as superior adult horror fare, closer to the spirit of Val Lewton than that of William Friedkin.

Certificate 18. Running Time 105 minutes.
A B

RED-BLOODED AMERICAN GIRL
Castle Pictures
**

I'm a blood user, but I also adore garlic and hate sleeping in coffins, says renaissance vampire Christopher Plummer in this offbeat chiller from David Blyth. New Zealand born director of DEATH WARMED UP. Plummer is the head of a sinister research establishment called Life Reach which enlists the help of discredited drug-designer Andrew Stevens to help find a cure for AIDS. But the bewildered Stevens soon realises that things are not quite right, by which time his sexy girlfriend Heather Thomas has been infected with Plummer's patent vamp-virus and is off on the prowl for some of the scarlet nectar.

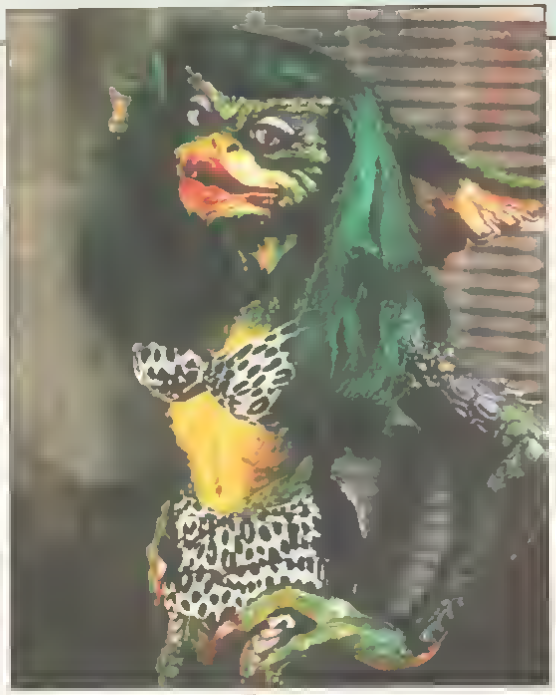
The opening scenes set the tone nicely for the film's often-compelling mixture of gore and eroticism: a nude Lydie Denier (remember her from MALEDICTION?) lies sprawled naked on a bed while her male vampire boyfriend snips open her neck with a pair of scissors and drinks the blood. Unfortunately the picture goes quickly downhill from here. These bloodsuckers don't have fangs, nor any problems seeing themselves in the mirror, and indeed the movie's central concept of treating vampirism as a scientific rather than supernatural affliction is quite intriguing. The film's main problem is that it doesn't know whether it wants to be a straightforward horror movie, a black comedy laced with soft porn images, or a James Bond style action piece. It has elements of all of these, but they never come together to form a coherent whole, and the ending is so incredibly weak that it was inevitable it would make a swift exit to video.



Director Blyth handles the visuals in an assured fashion, but the film lacks the energy (and gore content) of his earlier work. The only thing that just about holds the mish-mash of a plot together is Thomas's surprisingly strong performance as the raunchy leather-jackered vampiress of the title. She brings a balletic grace to every movement and a wicked sense of self parody to every dodgy line the script offers her. At the risk of sounding sexist about this, I'd say she's welcome to pop round my place for a bite anytime.

Certificate 18. Running Time 90 minutes.
R M





Come up and see me sometime

GREMLINS 2: THE NEW BATCH

Warner Home Video

**½

Joe Dante's movies have always had a tendency toward the cartoonish and never has this tendency been more in evidence than in this knockabout loony tunes sequel to his biggest commercial hit. The story kicks off six years on from the original GREMLINS. Billy Peltzer (Zach Galligan) and his girlfriend Kate (Phoebe Cates) have now left their cosy home town of Kingston Falls for jobs in the ultra-modern fully automated Clamp Towers. He works as an aspiring draughtsman while she wears a silly hat and conducts guided tours.

The hi-tech skyscraper complex has been built by entrepreneur Daniel Clamp (John Glover) on the Chinatown site that once housed the old curiosity shop belonging to Mr Wing, guardian of Gizmo the mogwai. Mr Wing is dead and the frightened Gizmo has now fallen into the hands of the sinister Dr Catheter (Christopher Lee), a genetic engineer who has a laboratory in the Clamp centre. Billy manages to rescue Gizmo from Catheter's clutches. But in the process the cute little creature is accidentally doused with water and spontaneously produces a horde of malicious mogwai who proceed to run riot through the building.

Dante presumably took this project because he needed a hit after the commercial failure of THE BURBS and EXPLORERS. But he has tried to ring the changes on the formula, abandoning the original's folksy small-town setting as well as its mean-spirited edge. What we get in THE NEW BATCH is an action packed muppet show built almost entirely around Rick Baker's brilliant special effects. As always with Dante movies the film is packed full of blink and you'll-miss-'em in-jokes from the Clamp cable TV network advertising a showing of CASABLANCA in full colour and with a happy ending, to a BATMAN shaped logo left in a wall by a flying gremlin. And of course there are the usual guest appearances by the Dante stock company (Dick Miller, Paul Bartel, John Astin, Robert Picardo, Belinda Belaski etc). You can even spot Dante's regular composer Jerry Goldsmith (whose score is a treat) queuing up at a popcorn stand.

But in-jokes do not an entertaining movie make, and it seems that Dante got so wrapped up in them that he lost interest in the (admittedly slim) storyline. It's easy to understand why Galligan and Cates are dreary characters who have very little to do, and even the cute little Gizmo only gets one brief moment of RAMBO-style heroism. It's left to the gremlins themselves to steal the show in a technically astonishing final sequence where they give out with a Busby Berkely rendition of New York, New York. Dante buffs will love it while others will probably think this is just too clever for its own good.

Certificate 15. Running Time 106 minutes.

R M





GRAVE SECRETS

S G E. Home Video

**

This routine supernatural thriller has EVE OF DESTRUCTION star Renee Soutendijk playing a woman tormented by ghostly apparitions. Business is pretty bad at Renee's picturesque country inn because no guest will stay beyond midnight. That's the time when footsteps can be heard coming down the stairs presaging the appearance of a macabre apparition who pops a vintage 78 record on the turntable and settles down in its favourite chair to read a book. Is this spook a party animal or what?

Anxious to get rid of her unwelcome guest Renee consults AMERICAN GRAFFITI star Paul Le Mat who plays a frayed-at-the-edges professor of psychic phenomena. At first Le Mat is understandably sceptical saying I don't know if you've been hearing the restless dead or bad plumbing. But he concedes there could be something to Renee's story when the unruly spectre takes an egg out of the fridge and splatters him in the face (in fact the yolk's on him). With the help of sophisticated video equipment and a seance conducted by famed medium David Warner, he sets out to uncover the ghost's identity. But in doing so he unlocks a dark secret from Renee's past which threatens to destroy them all.

Classy performances by the ever-intriguing Soutendijk and the jaded-looking Le Mat add some degree of welcome credibility to an increasingly hokey storyline. Unfortunately the tired plot never develops into anything worthwhile and even the script's supposedly shocking revelations of incest and infanticide provoke nothing but yawns when coupled with the poverty-raw zombie effects of the final reel.

Producer Donald P. Borchers (ANGEL, CRIMES OF PASSION, CHILDREN OF THE CORN) makes a competent enough directing debut but what his film needs is a great deal more gore (it's mild enough for a 15 cert) and a lot less chat. Come to think of it a decent ending wouldn't have hurt either.

Certificate 18. Running Time 90 minutes.

N T





PUPPET MASTER II
Entertainment In Video
**

Charlie Band s killer puppers ore back ro creore more low-budger mayhem in o colourful but routine programmer reminiscent of Stuart Gordon s DOLLS The plot sees o group of unlikely psychic investigators descending on on abandoned Bodega Bay Inn where according to one of the locals Soton hos o suite of rooms ond brimstone comes from the chimney Those who saw the first movie will remember thot the ploce was olso once the site of o series of mysterious murders where people s brains were found to hove been sucked out through their noses – the scripwriter being the first to go

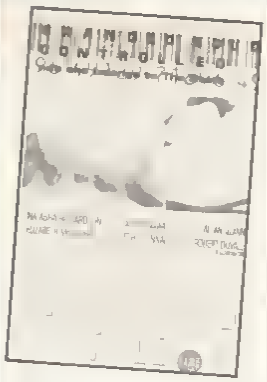
Anyway it turns out thot the house is still hounted not by Satan but by o gong of murderous morionettes who come out of secret possogeways to bore holes in thick teenoge skulls for very little discernible reoson Created mony yeors beforehond by o mysterious olchemist (we get to see the origin of the Puppet Master (Steve Welles) in o cheesy flashback to old Egypt) the moniacol puppets oll hove speciol abilities like Blade who is very nifty with o knife ond Torch who broils people olive with his built-in flomethrower In the opening scenes the puppets bring their master s decomposed corpse back to life with o jolt of re-onimoting fluid ond he later shows up ot the house swothed head to foot in bandages (looking like the Invisible Man) With the old of his tiny creations he intends to transfer his soul into o monnequin But first he hos to polish off the nosy psychic reseorchers

Quite stylishly directed by the Oscor-nominoted stop-motion effects expert David Allen this doesn t offer mony surprises from o scripting point of view But it s nevertheless worth seeing if only for the pleosingly surreolistic quolity of the sequences in which the homicidol puppers ore shown going obout their deodly handiwork (the best of these is on ottock on o remote farmhouse which seems to hove been heavily influenced by an oword-winning TWILIGHT ZONE episode colled THE INVADERS) Not bod of its stroight-to-video kind

Certificate 18 Running Time- 87 minutes
N T.

Boring scenes from Puppet Master II!





THE HANDMAID'S TALE
Virgin Video
**

A bizarre big budget fantasy scripted by Harold Pinter (from Margaret Attwood's novel) this is 1984-style feminist SF set in a future totalitarian state where Natasha Richardson is rounded up by the authorities following the death of her husband in an escape attempt. After training she is sent to work as a handmaid for high level security chief Robert Duvall and his wife Faye Dunaway. There her job is to act as a surrogate mum and provide the couple with the child that the barren Dunaway is unable to have.

Richardson's seduction by Duvall (in a strange threesome with Dunaway) is the most memorable scene in an occasionally intriguing movie which has many interesting elements (including an evocative score by Ryuichi Sakamoto and vivid cinematography and costume design) but fails to live up to its early promise. Director Volker Schlondorff (THE TIN DRUM) handles the visuals well and elicits fine performances from his talented trio of leads. But even the likes of Duvall, Dunaway and Richardson can't instil one vestige of genuine humanity into Pinter's typically spare and sterile script. Consequently the film engages the intellect rather than the emotions – which is a recipe for boxoffice disaster.

Certificate 15. Running Time 105 minutes.
A.B.

DER TODESKING
Headpress Video

After nekromantik Jorg Buttgereit returns to the small screen with another gloomy meditation on death, the universe and nothingness. DER TODESKING (The King of Death) examines an average week in the lives and deaths of a random sampling of angst-ridden blackheads in Berlin. Each day observes the misfortunes of one specific moribund individual accompanied by a time-lapse photography intermission of a human corpse gradually rotting away. High lights (if that's the right word) include a hairy freak splattering his girlfriend's brains across the wall as she interrupts him watching a pseudo-ILSA video, a girl rigging up a camera so she can film her blowing away a particularly wretched rock guitarist and various audience members and the final grief-stricken misery wailing and bashing his head against a wall for what seems like eternity.

Technically DER TODESKING is much more impressive than NEKROMANTIK, raking in a variety of photographic styles ranging from cinéma vérité hand-held shakiness to the Godard-influenced 360° camera revolutions charting the minoe of Monday's losers lost hours to the fake (and quite funny) Nazi movie video insert. The soundtrack too (partly composed by NEKRO's lonesome corpse-lover Doktori [!] Lorenz) is more ambitious and effective with variations on a morbid theme executed with a variety of instrumentation ranging from sub-Popol Vuh droning to Philip Glass-style repetition. The effects also avoid the home-movie excesses of NEKRO: the head splatter and rotting corpse being particularly convincing.

Really DER TODESKING needs more space than is available here to investigate its more serious themes and general purpose. Neither an exploitation film nor a full-blown art movie it occupies that bizarre middle ground somewhere between the two and it couldn't have come from *anywhere* other than Germany. It's certainly not to all tastes but Jorg Buttgereit has to be commended for making such an uncompromising movie one which doesn't cater to commercial concerns or the infantile rubber monster market.

Released in a limited edition and available only by mail order from HEADPRESS PO BOX 160 STOCKPORT CHESHIRE SK1 4ET.
Certificate 18. Running time 72 minutes.
S.J.

THE NAKED KISS
Palace Video

SHOCK CORRIDOR
Palace Video

Two wild sleazy films from the veteran director Sam Fuller (whose war film THE BIG RED ONE was inadvertently seized by James Anderton's crazed minions as porn during the video nasties hysteria) SHOCK CORRIDOR (1963) tells the twisted tale of unscrupulous reporter Johnny Barrett (Peter Breck) who decides to solve a murder case (and hopefully win himself a Pulitzer Prize) by going undercover into a lunatic asylum. The booby-hatch in question makes Bedlam seem mild in comparison but Johnny soon discovers details of the murder as he becomes friendly with his various fellow space-cases. Of course it's an ill wind after some pretty demented sequences culminating in him forcing the guilty culprit to confess. Johnny is revealed to be virtually catatonic – his hard worn Pulitzer prize will be awarded to someone with no more self awareness than a turnip.

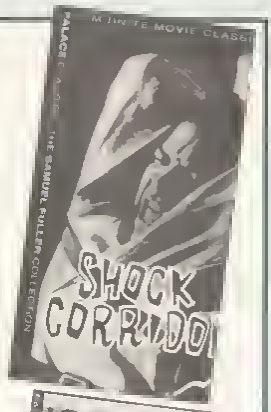
Virtually every aspect of SHOCK CORRIDOR is sweaty or unwholesome: inmates receive excessive shock treatments, Johnny's girlfriend (the striking Constance Towers soon to return in THE NAKED KISS) is a stripper and he has nightmares concerning her (imagined) infidelities. Johnny is attacked and almost torn to pieces by deprived (deprayed?) women from the nymphomaniac ward of the asylum and the film as a whole is riddled with a perverse sexual subtext. In its grim grimy and unflattering depiction of mental health SHOCK CORRIDOR has been found to be morally dubious and thematically rootless by concerned and well meaning individuals.

Well I'm not one of them so I'll give it my whole-hearted recommendation. Still worth picking up in spite of its recent TV screening.

THE NAKED KISS (1965) almost ruined Fuller's career and has one of the most startling openings ever committed to celluloid: simple as that! Following the shock beginning the film tells the tale of ex-prostitute Kelly (Constance Towers) settling down in small-town USA and trying to build a new life for herself. After becoming a pillar of the community through her nursing abilities and falling for the most respected man in town it looks like life is finally working out for her but there are several *extremely* unpleasant revelations in store. With such cheerful upbeat subject matter as murder child molestation prostitution police corruption and small town hypocrisy it's easy to see why Fuller wasn't exactly showered with accolades for this picture. His next picture (SHARKI with Burt Reynolds) didn't come out till 1970 and Fuller tried in vain to have his name removed from it but THE NAKED KISS together with SHOCK CORRIDOR and UNDERWORLD USA (if you can see an uncut print) is quintessential mid-period Fuller.

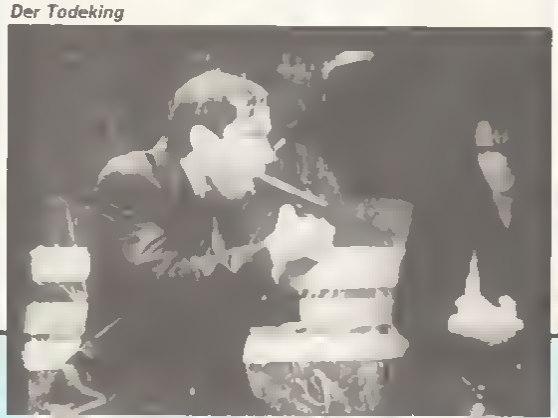
Oh sure these pictures are technically not horror but their overall effect is a hell of a lot more sordid and cathartic than subjecting yourself to the latest Fred Olen Ray stinker (or maybe not come to think of it!). But beware the review print of THE NAKED KISS was extremely poor dull and grainy in places with picture roll occurring at least twice.

SHOCK CORRIDOR Certificate 15 Running time 97 minutes
THE NAKED KISS Certificate 18 Running time 87 minutes
S.J.





Der Todeking





POST MORTEM

If you hove something you wont to get off your chest, don't be afraid to screom at us about it. Send your bouquets or brickbats to Post Mortem, The Dark Side, Panini House, 116-120 Goswell Road, London EC1 7QD

Dear Mr Bryce,
First mag I congratulate you on your excellent magazine. Being seen to read It increases prejudice against me ('Didn't your mother ever think there was something wrong with you?'), but stuff them – I enjoy it! My purpose in writing is to enquire about 'Shoek Around The Clock.' Where and when is it held, where do I get tickets, and how much are they? That's about it really. Incidentally, my mother doesn't think there's anything wrong with me – in fact she encourages me!
Thanks,
Elizabeth Lawson,
Ripon, North Yorks

My mum did too Elizabeth, and look where it got me! The Shock festival is organised by Alan Jones and Stefan Jaworzyn both regular contributors to this illustrious organ They tell me that they can't answer ANY of your questions at present because no venue or date has yet been set. The fest is usually held in July/ August at London's Scala but the Scala is closing in May for a lengthy refurbishment and it seems likely this year's Shock' may be held elsewhere We'll publish full details as soon as they become available

Dear Editor,
A mistake that has frequently popped up in most of the popular genre mags needs to be corrected. On page 18 of your February issue the pseudonym Clyde Anderson is credited to veteran Spanish director Carlos Aured (of Paul Naschy fame), whereas in fact it really belongs to Italian hack Claudio Fragasso.
Fragasso is director of AFTER DEATH and LA CASA 5, and of course NIGHT KILLER. He is a frequent script and story collaborator for Joe D'Amato's Filmirage and also works for Bruno Mattei (his most notable efforts have been on Mattei's nun movie, 'L'Altro Inferno' and 'La Vera Strorie De La Monaca Di Monza'). While we are on the subject of pseudonyms, does anyone know who Drago Floyd is – perhaps another name for Frogosso?
Gary Needham,
Glasgow, Scotland.

Thanks for the info Gary We stand corrected As for who Drago Floyd is, well only his mum knows for sure One day we might do a list of spaghetti pseudonyms, but don't hold your breath



Boris Karloff in THE MASK OF FU MANCHU

Dear Mr Bryce,
Your magazine is excellent in information, appearance, price and its great interviews. I especially like the section on Hommer glamour, but could you please do some profiles on the great stors – Lee, Steele, Cushing, Price, Karloff, Lugosi and Lon Chaney etc. Could you also include some centrefold horror posters like GOREZONE magazine, or make a poster out of your front page – I really liked the TWO EVIL EYES poster in issue 3.
Brenda,
Ireland.

Apart from our regular Hammer Glamour features we do intend to give a lot more coverage to golden oldies in future issues As for the poster idea, that would put the cost of printing up and we might have to increase our cover price accordingly At the moment we think it's better to do occasional poster giveaways rather than make it a regular thing

Dear Sir,
I can provide some info on THE BUSHWACKER (reader query, February). It was basically an ultra-low budget skinflick not given a BBFC certificate, and thus restricted to showing in cinema clubs. I saw it at Cineclub 24 in Tottenham Court Road on 14th May 1970 (fortunately I still have diaries going back to 1958). The film's title was painted on a sign that was part of the desert scenery and there were NO other credits! Several substantial cuts had been made (presumably by the GLC) and it was ineptly acted ond directed. I assume that it was probably shown in other large towns and cities because it appeared at Studio X in Reading towards the end of the 70s (I can't check my diary on this because I didn't go back for a second look!) I imagine that the magazine that your reader saw the film featured in was either CONTINENTAL FILM REVIEW or CINEMA X – probably the latter.
Now perhaps you (or one of your readers) can answer a couple of queries for me. In the late 40s (I was about ten years old) I saw a movie about a white gorilla which was obviously either THE WHITE GORILLA (1947) or WHITE PONGO



WHITE PONGO

(1945), but which had been reittled ADVENTURE UNLIMITED in order to cash in on a currently popular nightly at 6.45. The question is, what film was it? (I can assure you it was terrible, even to a 10-year-old viewer, but these questions are purely for research purposes!)

Next question: Sometime in 1956 I saw a low budget Blw spy film starring Dennis Price and Peggy Ann Garner. It was made in English but set (and possibly produced) in Germany. I cannot trace any reference to this ANYWHERE, not even in 50s issues of F. Maurice Speed's 'Film Review' annual. Can anyone out there help me with the title and director?

Finally, a word of (restrained) praise. The most recent issue of THE OARK SIOE is the first one that I've actually bought. I realise that it is intended for macabre and fantasy fans rather than middle aged movie freaks. But there's a lot of competition out there, and in my opinion you should increase your film coverage with more informative articles like the interview with Abel Ferrare, if necessary at the expense of other areas.

T. Kirkpatrick,
Weston-Super-Mare, Aven.

A glance through this very issue should reveal that we've taken heed of your words. As a middle aged movie freak I'm sure you'll enjoy Colin Davis's perceptive look at the short career of Antony Balch! To answer your questions, ADVENTURE UNLIMITED was the GB title of WHITE PONGO, a 1945 Newfield Brothers production utilising the same gorilla suit as the previous year's NABONGA. The plot had undercover policeman Richard Fraser going on safari with a group of British biologists (who are out to capture a mystic white primate) because he believes one of them to be a killer. The Dennis Price movie you seek is not a Dennis Price movie at all! It's a little-seen 63 minute programmer called THE BLACK FOREST (1954) which was made on location in Germany by director Gene Martel. It starred Peggy Ann Garner, Akim Tamiroff and Gardon Howard.

CASTLE OF THE LIVING DEAD





Dear Ed,
I am an avid fan of 'B' films from the 40s, 50s, and 60s. Unfortunately only a small number of these films are available on video in the UK. Companies in the United States advertise dozens of these titles, but none of them are available on our PAL system. It's very frustrating. Why can't any UK company market these films? I am sure there must be many addicts like me who would jump at the chance of buying them. Can any reader tell me where 'B' movie classics can be purchased in this country? Or perhaps you can help me with info on a cheap method of converting the American system to PAL? One final question: Do you know where I can get hold of the Christopher Lee CASTLE OF THE LIVING OEAD, and THE BLOODY PIT OF HORROR?
C. Rendell,
Coventry.

You'll find a number of golden oldies on sell through of course, but nothing approaching the wealth of esoteric material available on the American market. Fortunately technology has moved on, and you can now buy VCRs that play American NTSC tapes to PAL television sets. Mitsubishi do one for around the £400 mark. Then you can get vintage horror material really cheaply (about a tenner a tape INCLUDING postage) from such U.S. companies as SINISTER CINEMA. Write for a catalogue and details to P.O. Box 777, Pacifica, California CA 094044 (or if you can't wait you can phone them on 0101-415-359-3292!). I believe that SINISTER should be able to help you out with both titles you requested.



Dear Mr Bryce,
Congretulations on a first-rete publication. Most impressive. As a true fan of the horror genre (ever since I saw my first blood-spattered screen) I must say that THE DARK SIOE is one of the first magazines of its kind that I have found to be worth reading. I personally have enjoyed tremendously the short fiction stories you have already printed, and look forward to more of the same. Also, the article on director Michele Soavi was well worth the effort, informative, interesting and written with intelligence (unlike a few interviews in some less charismatic competitors!).

But there is one thing I do have to ask, and that is, Is there any possibility of a future article going over some of the classic black and white movies starring the greatest and most sinister actors of all time: Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney etc? I wasn't even a twinkle in my own Mummy's eye when these came out, but after viewing them for the first time I was hooked. I know some may say the above-mentioned are old hat and not worth the effort, but the Jason's and the Freddy's of today owe them a debt of gratitude for opening up the horror field in the first place. Keep up the good work and best wishes for the future.
Paul,
Highburg, London.



Lon Chaney's WOLFMAN

COMPETITION WINNERS ISSUE 4:

TOTAL RECALL

Peter Dight, Gosport, Hants
A. Jenkins, Reading, Berkshire
Jake Chatty, Billerickey, Essex
Roy Bicknell, Wellingborough, North Hants
P.S. Lewis, Croydon, Surrey
Sherlock Chinsen, Altham Moor, Leeds
Billy Sawicki, Norwich, Norfolk
Graham Pearson, Hampton, Evesham
Stuart Anderson, County Tyron, N. Ireland
S. Roe, Highams Park, London E4

SALUTE OF THE JUGGER

Keith Robinson, Sidcup, Kent
Jonathan Davis, Wollasten, Northamptonshire
Daniel Soee, Gosten, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne
Tom Gilpin, Exeter, Devon
Sean Hutchinson, Altham Moor, Leeds
Christopher Parks, Braithwell, South Yorks
Mrs L. Dunscombe, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff
Mrs M. Randall, Luton, Beds.
Miss P.A. Alldritt, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton
W.J. Collins, Willenhall, West Midlands

GATE II

Mrs P. Collins, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton
James Burns, Nether Green, Sheffield
S. Stabler, Peterborough
Mrs C. Kesler, Altrigham, Cheshire
John Bailey, Lakeside, Cardiff
Justin Phillips, Farnford, Glos
M. Stone, Grimsby
P. Chan, Cleckheaton
J. Parker, Plaistow, London E13
Gary Croft, Wakefield, West Yorks

Hammer GLAMOUR

What red-blooded male horror fan wouldn't fancy having his neck nibbled by voluptuous vamp Yutte Stensgaard? Richard Marshall dreels over the short but memorable career of Hammer's deadly Dane...

Back in the days when Robin Askwith was the unemployed dreamer in movies and ON THE BUSES was the height of sophisticated British comedy (come to think of it it still is – Ed), beautiful Danish-born Yutte Stensgaard was one of Hammer's sexiest bloodsuckers. Her finest hour and a half came when she starred in LUST FOR A VAMPIRE (1971), playing Mircalla/Carmilla, a beautiful vampire who enrols in an exclusive finishing school located in Karnstein Castle, the site of various low budget black magic rituals. Yutte manages to put the bite upon just about everyone in the cast, including DEAR JOHN star Ralph Bates, before being zapped by a fiery beam – this gal really IS hot stuff!

The film was the second in Hammer's notorious 'Karnstein' trilogy of sexy vampire pics based around characters from J. Sheridan Le Fanu's novel, CARMILLA (which also furnished the inspiration for Roger Vadim's BLOOD AND ROSES). The role of the entrancing heroine had been taken by Ingrid Pitt in THE VAMPIRE LOVERS (1970), and audiences were to get a double dose of cheesecake from the Collinson twins in the later TWINS OF EVIL.

LUST was to have been Yutte's big break, but unfortunately the film as a whole didn't enjoy the same boxoffice success as its predecessor. Clumsily directed by veteran Hammer scriptwriter Jimmy Sangster (who zoomed in on buiging cleavage or gory neck bites whenever the plot flagged), it was a very silly affair that reached its nadir with the inclusion of a dreadful song (foisted on it at the last minute by the producers). The tuneless ditty was called 'Strange Love,' and was very strange indeed – Sangster admits he prayed for the ground to swallow him up when this came on at a preview screening! At least Sangster was to survive the debacle and go on to find greater fame as a writer/director of Hollywood TV movies. Yutte, on the other hand



wae tn find few nther parts ehe could eo effectively get her teeth into.

Yutte was born in Denmark (as Jytte Steeoegaard) in 1948 and came to England at the age of 19, where ehe was 'dlscovered' by British producer Betty Box and given emall rolee as attractive set decoration in A GIRL WITH A PISTOL and THE BUTTERCUP CHAIN. She had no inhibitions about taking her clothes off on screen, and so, not surprisingly, soon drifted lntn low budget sex features like A PROMISE OF BED (1970 – also known as THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER). This film starred Victor Spinetti as a euicidal bloke whoee life was inadvertently saved by a voluptunus party-loving blonde (Vanessa Howard). Running parallel to the main narrative was a humoroue suh-plot ahout a randy taxi driver (John Bird) whn dreame of a fantasy world populated by naked eunbathers and stripteasers – one of whom wae Yutte!

The same year ehe appeared with her clothee on in Betty Box'e DOCTOR IN TROUBLE, a forgettable addition to the long-runnlog movie series baeed on Richard Gordon'e hooks. The rakish Leslie Phillipe etarred ne madcap womanchaeer Dr Burke, whnse pursuit nf mini-ekirted Angela Scoular gets him etuck on hoard nn ocean liner and labelled a etowaway. Needleee to say James Robertsnn Juetice'e formidahie Slr Lancelot Spratt was also along for the farcical voyage. Stenegaard played a character named Eve, who received the full henefit of our hero's emarmy hedside manner...

After thie Yutte began to gather a few credits in the horror/fantasy area, first nf all moving to Hammer'e chief rival, Amicue Filme, to feature slongside genre giants Christopher Lee, Vinceot Price snd Peter Cuehing In SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN, a confused but entertaining tale of a mad scientist (Price) who is huilding a snper race by attaching other people's limbe to hie laborstory creatinns. Based on Peter Saxon'e THE DISORIENTATED MAN, the film's beet sequence has nne nf theee euper-powerful creatinne ripping hie own arm off to escape pnlice handcuffs, then diving lnto a vst of hubbling acid!



Yutte in LUST FOR A VAMPIRE



She moved on to appear once more for Betty Box in the little-seen Bulldog Drummond adventure SOME GIRLS DO, playing 'Number One,' leader of an army of mini-skirted robots intent on taking over the world (others included Virginia North and Vanessa Howard). Richard Johnson was the debonair hero, and James Villiers the malevolent super-villain. Yutte then essayed a similar role in the even more obscure ZETA ONE (known in the US as THE LOVE FACTOR), which was an ultra-low-budget 1970 slice of sexy SF about a group of outer space cuties called Angvians who battle British agents for control of the Earth. A mark of the film's quality (or lack of it) can be found in the fact that 'Carry On' regular Charles Hawtrey gives the only memorable performance!

After that came Yutte's first and only starring role in LUST FOR A VAMPIRE. The film's poor boxoffice reception effectively ended the ambitious young actress's chances of following in the footsteps of such famed Hammer heroines as Ursula Andress, Raquel Welch or even Ingrid Pitt. Thereafter she married Tony Curtis (not the film star – the art director on Amicus Films!) and took a few decorative roles in television shows like THE PERSUADERS, DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE, JASON KING and RETURN OF THE SAINT, before disappearing from the acting scene altogether in the mid-70s. It seems that Yutte's marriage broke up around about the same time and she moved to Beverly Hills where she remarried and had one child. We wish her all the best wherever she may be, and hope she enjoys our little tribute...



Would you lust after this vampire?



Lost in Space

PART 2

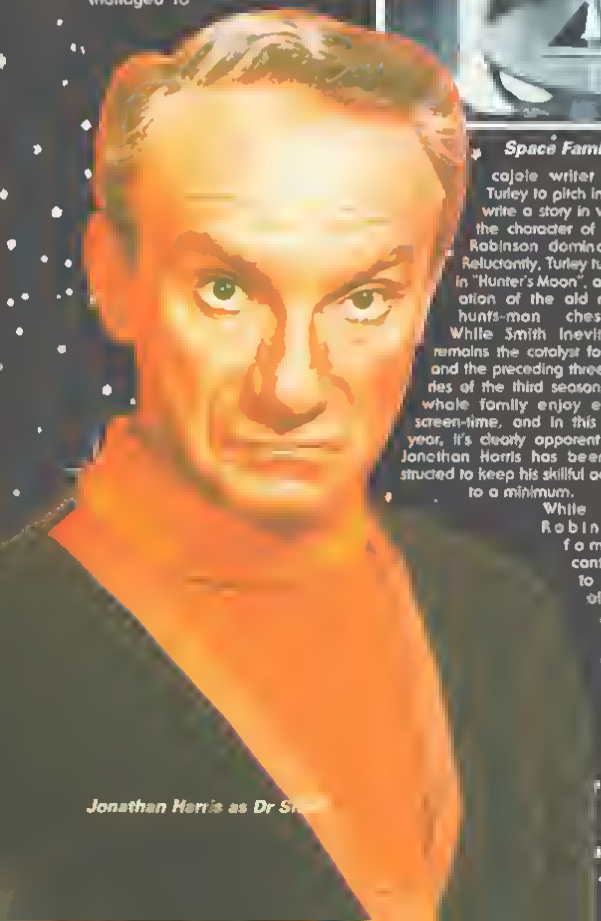
Jon Abbott continues his writer's guide to the adventures of the Space Family Robinson

Will, Doctor Smith and the Robot rapidly came to dominate Lost In Space, and there is little doubt that the pace and entertainment value suffered when these characters were not the focus of attention. Penny and Judy were no substitutes for Will and it is easily those stories starring this bizarre trio of intergalactic explorers (with the two male leads charging in to mop up at the end) that work the best. Of course the other members of the cast, in particular leading man Guy Williams, were understandably not particularly happy with the direction the show had taken.

To placate Guy Williams, story editor Anthony Wilson managed to cajole writer Jack Turley to pitch in and write a story in which the character of John Robinson dominated. Reluctantly, Turley turned in "Hunter's Moon", a variation of the old man-hunts-man chestnut. While Smith inevitably remains the catalyst for this and the preceding three stories of the third season, the whole family enjoy equal screen-time, and in this final year, it's clearly apparent that Jonathan Harris has been instructed to keep his skillful ad-libs to a minimum.



Space Family Robinson – the cast.



Jonathan Harris as Dr Smith

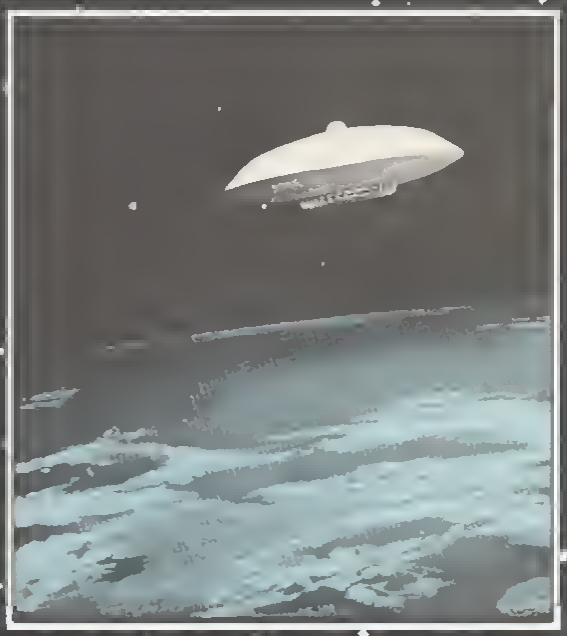
While the Robinson family continue to cram all of themselves into almost every frame of many third season episodes whether they have lines or not, our intrepid trio gradually reassert their dominance of the stories as the season wears on. Although June Lockhart takes centre stage with Smith in the second season's "The Golden Man", she is the only cast member who *doesn't* have her own storyline in the third season.

The relationship between Smith and the antagonistic Major West (the only member of the Jupiter Two's party of dupes who regularly sees through Smith's transparent tissue of lies) is explored in "The Space Primevals" and "Fugitives In Space", the Robot takes centre stage in "Deadliest Of The Species", and even Smith gets his own personal episode, reunited with Fritz Feld's officious Zumdish for the farcical "Two Weeks In Space".

Williams got to show off his sword-fighting skills from his *Zorro* days in "The Space Destructors", and features far more prominently in episodes such as "Kidnapped In Space", "Target: Earth", and "The Time Merchant". His tour-de-force though – with Mark Goddard's Major West – is clearly the superb fan favourite "Anti-Matter Man", in which he and Goddard enjoy dual roles as their evil duplicates. The genuine suspense and creativity built into this Old Faithful of fantasy scenarios, particularly the all-stops-out direction of Sutton Roley, provides a tantalising glimpse of just how great the series could have been when everybody concerned was giving 100 percent. Although credited to the pseudonym "K C Allson", it is in fact co-written by Barney Slater and Robert Hamner.

Robert Hamner came on board for the third and final season, and rapidly captured the flavour of the series with such typical mixes of hysterical adventure and clever comedy as "Kidnapped In Space", "The Space Destructors", "Deadliest Of The Spe-

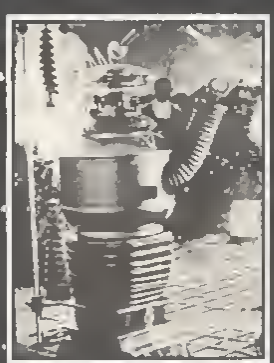












dies , and "Fugitives In Space". With Smith as eternal victim, and a strong understanding of the series' comedic strengths, Hammer provided a welcome anti-thesis to both Packer's black-hatted bug-eyed monsters and the other writers' parade of whining loveable loonies. Given his versatility and creativity here, one can only speculate what he might have achieved in his other role as writer for the more constricting formula of *Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea*, had he been let off his leash while serving on the Seaview.

Fellow *Voyage* writers William Read Woodfield and Allan Balter toyed with the series on two occasions, once with the eerie first season story "Attack Of The Monster Plants" (an accurate and descriptive title, if nothing else!) and again with the lighter "Wild Adventure", a mermaid-in-space yarn introducing space-siren Athena. Previously, Balter had written episodes of *The Outer Limits*; later they became story editors and then producers on *Mission: Impossible*.

Assigned the task of writing the episodes featuring the Robinson girls was Jackson Gillis a busy television writer whose work alternates between murder mysteries (*Perry Mason*, *Columbo*, *Blacke's Magic*) and adventure drama (*Voyage/Sea*, *Knight Rider The Equaliser*, etc).

Gillis also favoured story-book zanies over alien invaders and ray-guns, and introduced intergalactic showman Famum B (Leonard Stone) to the series in two slow-moving tales, "A Day At The Zoo" and "Space Beauty". All his episodes put the emphasis on the girls after his first highly acclaimed "My Friend Mr Nobody", a first season highlight.

After this success, Gillis reworked the theme with other goofy alien boyfriends for Angela Cartwright's Penny in the excellent first season gem "The Magic Mirror" and the considerably less excellent "The Haunted Lighthouse". Gillis, once a prolific writer on the 1950's *Superman* TV series, wrote seven episodes of *Lost In Space*, and one similarly child-like *Land Of The Giants*, "Our Man O'Reilly" (apparently completely oblivious to the fact that the series didn't take place on Earth!).

Storybook approach included Margaret Brookman-Hill, who wrote a single episode concerning a confrontation with Norse gods Thor and Brunhilde ("The Space Vikings") and Michael



Fessler, who wrote the worst episode in the entire series. Fessler was a former writer of Fred Astaire films who had later carved a unique niche for himself writing musical comedy westerns, and later episodes of *Bonanza* and *The High Chapparal*. It seems clear that Fessler either jumped on the bandwagon as it passed, or was commissioned to write this dreadful western spoof, the "Spock's Brain" of *Lost In Space* episodes. Stupid and illogical by even the flexible standards of *Lost In Space*, the most glaring irritant is Dr Smith mouthing reams of scene-setting exposition that he couldn't possibly have known.

Another writer teetering on the brink of the credibility gap was Carey Wilber, who struck gold with "A Visit To Hades", a zany yarn in which Smith must seemingly pay for his sins (but Satan is in fact a smooth charmer, seducing Judy into releasing him from an alien prison), and "The Astral Traveller", which takes Will and Smith on a visit to a Scottish castle back on Earth, complete with "Angus", a seaweed monster in the loch!

These are amusing at least, but Wilber's "The Questing Beast", a disastrously over-the-top pantomime hammed into oblivion by the late Hans Conreid, and "Treasure Of The Lost Planet", bringing back his "Sky Pirate" Tucker (the splendid Albert Salmi) for a talky treasure hunt, were ponderous yarns that even Harris couldn't rescue.

Wilber went straight for the humorous vein in *Lost In Space* with his visiting characters but as Smith and the Robot already had that aspect of the series catered for, the result was often overkill, and the episodes degenerated into tiresome farce. Generally, the writers knew that Harris and May would ad-lib bits of business into the script, but Wilber went out of his way to include such scripted "humour" as the foolish scenes in "Hades" in which Smith is shown bad behaviour from his past with Harris playing Smith of all ages including infant and child. The flashback scenes in the excellent "Prisoners Of Space" had already demonstrated how this might effectively be done with clips. While that episode (by Barney Slater) attempted to bridge the two incarnations of Smith as scenery-chewing villain of the pilot and bungling coward of later episodes, these flashbacks make absolutely no sense at all.

Wilber wrote six episodes, four of them determinedly silly ones, two of which worked, two of which didn't, but his two first season contributions, "There Were Giants In The Earth", for which he wrote Smith into the pilot footage, and "His Majesty Smith" were fine. Wilber also wrote "Space Seed" for *Star Trek*, which introduced Khan into the *Star Trek* mythos, and three *Time Tunnel* stories, the excellent Custer episode "Massacre", the weird "Chase Through Time" guest starring Robert Duvall, and the daffy "Town Of Terror".

William Welch, who wrote for all of Allen's series, but was most prolific on *Voyage* (33 episodes, plus 9 *Land Of The Giants* and 8 *Time Tunnel*) wrote four episodes of *Lost In Space*, three for the first season, and one – "The Space Creature" – for the third. Welch was Allen's right-hand man and story editor on *Voyage* and *Time Tunnel*, and often wrote budget-crunching fillers for existing props, no guest stars, and standing sets when other episodes had gone over-budget.

Like many *Voyage* episodes, "The Space Creature" was set within the confines of the ship, with the regulars gradually vanishing one by one due to the presence of an alien force. The only other set was a black, bare mist-enveloped void and the alien was created by slinging a sheet over the actor concerned! However, expense doesn't equal quality, and the episode was quite entertaining; Welch clearly went to the series' inspiration, the 1956 feature *Forbidden Planet* (which also inspired and influenced Star Trek) for the punchline.

Packer, Slater, Hamner and Welch would take science-fiction ideas and try to work them into the *Lost In Space* format. The Duncans, Gillis, and Wilber would take child-like fantasies or figures from other genres and then try to coat them with sci-fi elements. The two approaches at least complimented each other, although most audiences – including kids – tend to prefer the episodes with menaces rather than eccentrics.

Lost In Space has taken a good deal of criticism over the years, ranging from genuine disdain to cheap shots. much of it unfair and misjudged. 1960's series series such as *Lost In Space*, *Batman*, *Time Tunnel*, *Wild Wild West*, *The Man/Girl from UNCLE*, *Honey West*, *The Avengers*, *The Invaders*, and *Land Of The Giants* may not be "straight", "serious" or scientifically accurate, but they stimulate the imagination with their humour and inventiveness far more than 70's or 80's fantasy series that have come along since. Soda pop can be just as enjoyable as the fine wine of *Star Trek*, *Twilight Zone*, and *Outer Limits* all of which had their fair share of duffer moments, and they remain remarkably entertaining in their own right.



Kidnapped In Space
The Space Destructors
Deadliest Of The Species
Two Weeks In Space
Anti-Matter Man (with Barney Slater)
Fugitives In Space

Jackson Gillis episodes

My Friend Mr Nobody
The Magic Mirror
The Thief From Outer Space
The Haunted Lighthouse
A Day At The Zoo
Princess Of Space
Space Beauty

Carey Wilber's episodes

There Were Giants In The Earth
The Sky Pirate
His Majesty Smith
A Visit To Hades
The Questing Beast
Treasure Of The Lost Planet
The Astral Traveller

William Welch's episodes

The Hungry Sea
One Of Our Dogs Is Missing
The Lost Civilisation
The Space Creature

Other episodes

Attack Of The Monster Plants (Woodfield/Balter)
Wild Adventure (Woodfield/Balter)
West Of Mars (Michael Fessler)
The Space Vikings (Margaret Brackman-Hill)
Hunter's Moon (Jack Turley)

Note: Shimon Wincelberg wrote the pilot (under his pen name S-Bar David) which never aired. Dr Smith and the Robot were added to the cast and new stories were built around the pilot footage which was used in episodes 1 to 5 and 8. These are
The Reluctant Stowaway
The Derelict
Island In The Sky
There Were Giants In The Earth
The Hungry Sea
Invaders From The Fifth Dimension
Wincelberg has sole script credit on 1 and 8.


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CORMAN UNBOUND

Alan Jones interviews Roger Corman, King of the 'B's

What do directors Frsncis Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Peter Bogdsnovich, Joe Dante snd Jonathsn Demme have in common? Give up?

Next question: Who gave Robert De Nlro, Jack Nichoison, Ellen Burstyn, Peter Fonda, Bruce Dern, Tslis Shire snd Dennis Hopper their first break? Stiil no ides?



Then try this: What links the cult movie A BUCKET OF BLOOD, the Edgar Alisn Poe horror series starting with HDUSE OF USHER, the ultra-controversisl THE WILD ANGELS and the still bsnned in Britain LSD-a-Go-Go fantasy THE TRIP?

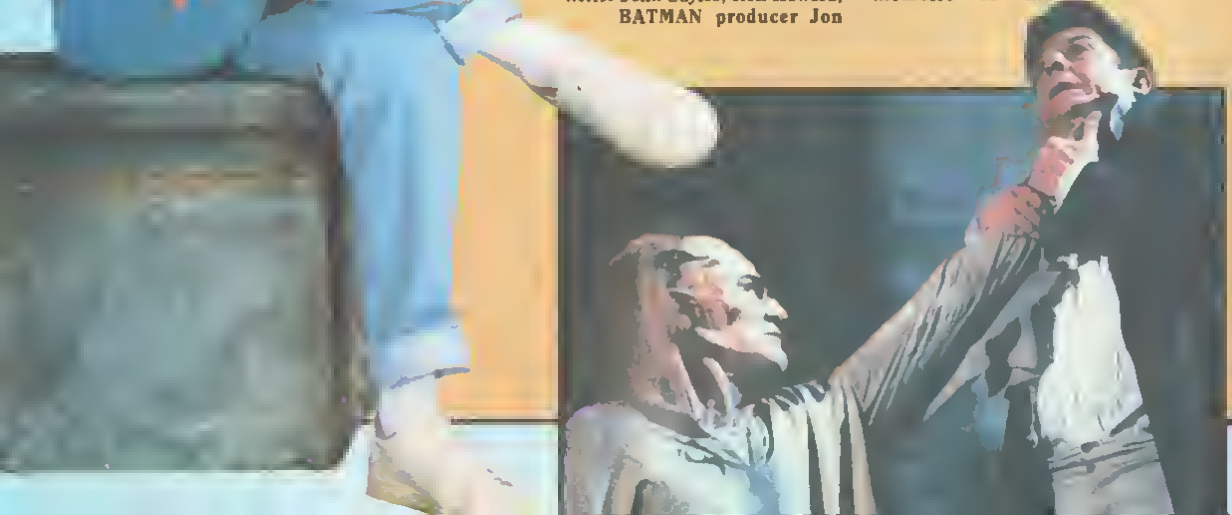
The snswer is Roger Corman – director, producer, distributor snd darling of critics everywhere. He sold hls first script HIGHWAY DRAGNET In 1953 and since then hls high camp, low budget output hss lsbelled him the consummate Hollywood hustler, the greatest expioitation maverick of all time. A genius at the guerrilla warfare approach to chesply msde schlock – THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS was shot in three dsys – Corman's huge genre influence over the psst four decsdes csn never be dismissed.

From IT CONQUERED THE WORLD and BLOODY MAMA, through BIG DOLL HOUSE snd Bergman's CRiES AND WHISPERS, (relessed vis his distribution set-up New World Pictures), to WATCHERS II and ROCK'N'RDLL HIGH SCHOOL FOREVER, (for his latest compsny Concorde), Cormsn hss given hundreds of Hollywood hopefuls a vsstly underpsid shot. Add EATING RAOUL's Paul Bartel, CHINATOWN scripter Robert Towne, ALIENS' James Csmeron and Gale Anne Hurd, PIRANHA writer John Sayles, Ron Howsrd, BATMAN producer Jon



Davidson and John Millus to the endless list owing this one-msn industry phenomenon s massive debt. How he made Vincent Price *the* archetypal horror star, revived the careers nf Boris Karioff snd Peter Loore, hsd sffsirs with most of his iesding sctresses snd took scid whlle researching THE TRIP are all now part of Tinseltown folklore, the endnring legend that is Roger Cormsn, the msn, the myth and the innovsting magicisn.

You can read all about those stories and more entertalning memoirs in his



recent autobiogrspby 'How I Msde s Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost s Dime'. The title refers to his personal fortune (as the recist saga THE INTRUDER and the post-hippie GAS-S-S-S were miserable failures). Time will tell if his latest, FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUNO, suffers the ssme fate. Based on Brisn Aldiss' novel, it's the firet time Corman hss stepped behind a camera since directing VON RICHTHOFEN ANO BROWN in 1970.

Now 64 years old, the slim, dignified and self-styled trendsetter never really retired. It's just that New World was so successful he never had time left over from taking care of company business to put his hard-esrned money where his own lens wss. The prnducer responsible for getting Corman bsck to work is Thom Mount who first had the ides of remaking FRANKENSTEIN while head of Univereal. Corman explained, "They did some msrket research about what audiences wanted to see aod found a movie titled ROGER CORMAN'S FRANKENSTEIN could be a hit. I discussed script idess with Wes Creven but then decided agsinst it because I felt it would get lost amongst the countless FRANKENSTEIN movies already msde".

A year lster Mount called sgain snd was turned down a second time. Corman continued, "Then Thom formed The Mount Company and tried reviving my interest once more. Ouring our talks I remembered the Aldiss novel. t'd read it fifteen years ago snd for no reason It suddenly popped back into my mind. Once I'd said I'd like to do that, the project became a reality".

20th Century Fox snd Warner Bros agreed to co-finsnce the $9 million production, written by Corman and former film critic F X Feeney, detailing what happens when s scientist from 203t drives a talking computer car through a timeslip to arrive st Lake Genevs in t8t6. Thst's where the celebrated 'Haunted Summer' took plsce resulting in Msry Shelley writing 'Frenkenstein, or the Modern Prometheus'.

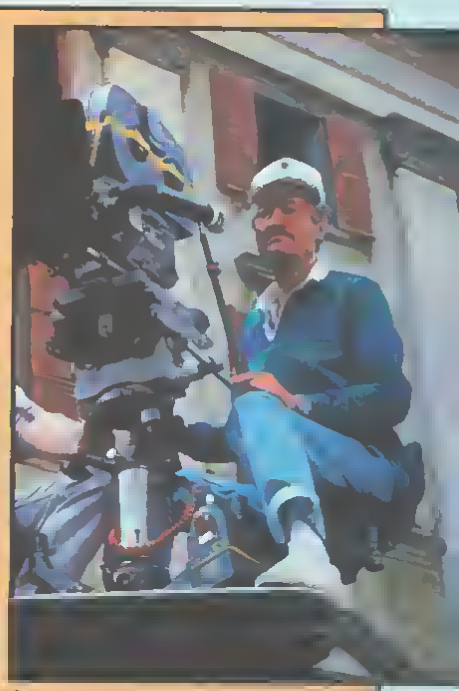
But she based it on fsct spparently ss the infamous doctor was her neighbour snd his monstrous creation was meant to fulfil an unusual destlny back in the future.

Corman said, "We changed the script into s detective story, replaced the novel's first person nsrrative with the speaking car, snd turned Aldiss' time-trsvelling diplomat into s scientist to drew parallels between the different past and future experimentsl generations. Creating life playing God is the moral core and tbe religious overtones were unavoidsble because reading Shelley's book again I was struck by how insightful it wss, and I'm s lapsed Catholic!"

Cormsn's blend of BACK TO THE FUTURE snd GOTHIC stare John Hurt, Rsul Julis, Bridget Fonds, (Peter's daughter), LOST BOY Jason Patric and



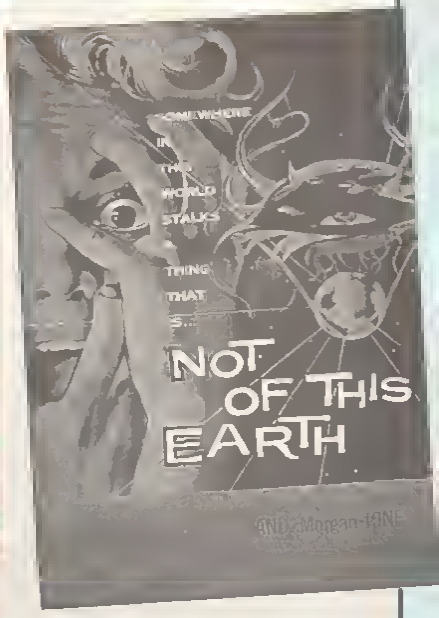
FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND

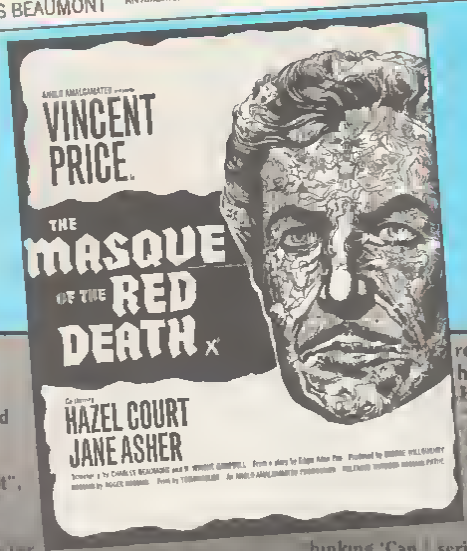


Corman at work









Kylie's guy Michael Hutchence. "A good story in a well developed script attracts the be t cast", visiting [illegible] ANDREW [illegible] returning to his first love. He recalled, "It was the first morning and I was driving to Lake Como thinking 'Can I seriously pull [illegible] he

to be 95 minutes or more. My 86 minute final cut was considered far too short for a major release" – the movie attracted great reviews. He continued, "That surprised everyone. It was the best received Fox movie of 1990 and they screwed it up. Not one review was bad and I was being compared to Fellini and Kurosawa".

Corman hopes it will get a fairer crack globally based on this acclaim. Although world premiered at last year's 'Shock Around the Clock' festival, here Warners deemed it a 'difficult' sell and handed it over to Blue Dolphin Films after the enterprising distributors effectively positioned the rerelease of the uncut PAT GARRETT AND BILLY THE KID. Corman moaned, "That's the problem these days. Studios are too blockbuster orientated to bother with medium budget pictures. Their preoccupation with, and emphasis on, hardware movies has boosted budgets to levels that can't be sustained. What sort of business are we in when $50 million grossers actually lose money? Have they forgotten all about artistry?"

But forever the die hard opportunist, Corman plans to cash in on these events and his reclaimed status by directing FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND II for his company Concorde. "Nothing is concrete though", he pointed out. "Aldiss wrote me a lovely letter saying how much he liked it and he'[illegible] mentioned turning his [illegible] DRAC[illegible]A UNBOUND into movie [illegible] So I hav[illegible] quite de[illegible] that [illegible] Il[illegible]nkie [illegible] wa t t[illegible]n for anoth[illegible] es[illegible]n [illegible] F

That great horror star Lon Chaney was born on the 1st of April 1883, which makes him roughly the same age as our resident witch, Hadrio Hemlock. If you're wondering what's in store for the rest of the month, read on...



horrorScope

CAPRICORN
22nd Dec – 20th Jan

It may be a good time to think about major repairs to your chateau or haunted castle. Finances are beginning to pick up, so go for it. A friend has a good idea on the 25th, so pin your pointed ears back and listen to his advice.

AQUARIUS
21st Jan – 18th Feb

You'll be diving round different haunts (or haunting different dives) in a month that you will see you covering new ground in both your career and personal life. Watch out on the 28th – the night of the full moon, when drink could be your undoing...

PISCES
19th Feb – 20th Mar

You are frustrated because you are unable to get a head in head'et and a shoch on the 7th will set you back even further, so don't spend too much early in the month. The good news is you will be hopelessly bewitched by a devastating charmer of the opposite sex – your place or mine?

ARIES
21st Mar – 20th April

You're in fine form, but others could find you too heavy around the castle – full of supposed good ideas about matters that don't concern you. You'll be far more popular if you leave others to sort themselves out and curl up with a good book – or better still a copy of THE DARK SIDE.

TAURUS
21st April – 21st May

Apart from an explosive row with a partner on the 4th it's a very smooth month where everything appears to be going your way. One word of warning though – be careful not to sign anything without reading the fine print very carefully first – they caught Dr Faustus like that, you know!

GEMINI
22nd May – 21st June

You're playing snakes and ladders this month and every step forward seems to take you further back. Things get better toward the end of the month as the dice begin to go your way for a change, and you finish on an optimistic note having achieved your aims.

CANCER
22nd June – 22nd July

A friend saves you from a tricky situation around the 16th, when your common sense goes out of the window and you foolishly rush into agreeing to something you shouldn't. But some people never learn and your neck is on the line once more on the 28th. Don't be a sucker – think before you act.

LEO
23rd July – 23rd Aug

This is a month for thoughts rather than action. Ponder, wonder, muse, and you'll get on just fine. But if you take early action on plans then they are bound to go wrong and you will meet up with the proverbial stone wall – as when cousin Elektra got locked in her crypt.

VIRGO
24th Aug – 23rd Sept

The second part of the month is clouded with passion – an unwelcome storm in your neat, well ordered teacup which will send you flying around in circles of panic. Well it out and you will find that everything is eventually resolved to your advantage.

LIBRA
24th Sept – 23rd Oct

You're obsessed by a partnership of some kind, which started out in a platonic fashion but now seems to be taking a turn in a more intimate direction. Don't row over money on the full moon of the 28th. After all, you CAN take it with you. Just ask Beetlejuice.

SCORPIO
24th Oct – 22nd Nov

Small jobs around the house and office keep you busy. There's too much to do, but don't get ratty because there's a light at the end of the tunnel. Friends will show their appreciation around the 20th, and you may have to make a tough decision on the 27th.

SAGITTARIUS
23rd Nov – 21st Dec

A good month for taking a gamble. Buy a lottery ticket on the 16th and your luck could be in. Don't get involved in any games of Russian Roulette though – your luck's not THAT good! Stay away from the highway or you could start to feel a bit run down toward the end of the month.

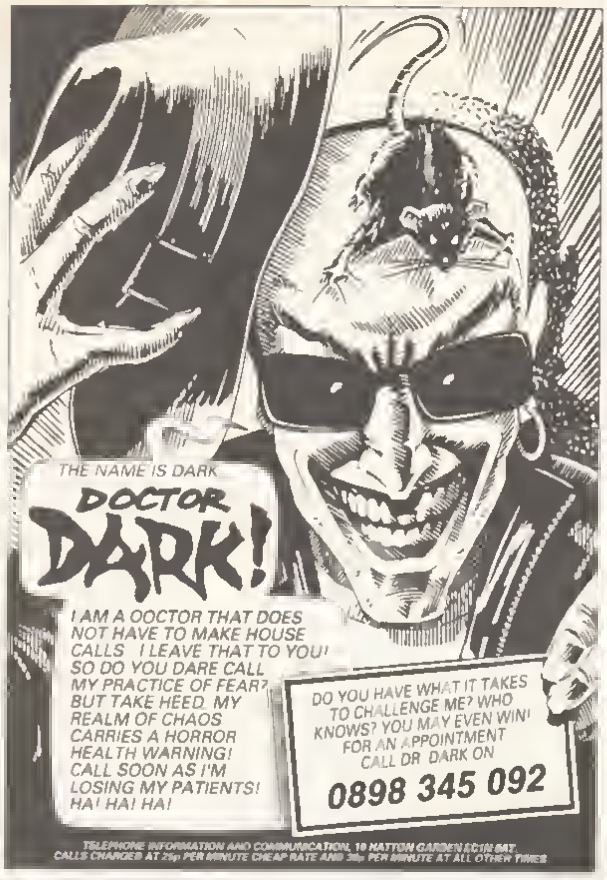




COMING NEXT MONTH!

May is the month of macabre ritual, when strange, wild-eyed creatures come forth from their darkened caves to suck the blood of the living. But even poll tax collectors have to relax sometimes, and when they do they will surely want to settle down with the bumper May edition of THE DARK SIDE, a publication that Stephen King (not the writer, but the landlord of The Hand And Racquet, Surbiton) has described as 'More chilling than a handful of ice cubes down your Y-fronts!' Yes, if it's short, sharp shocks you want then we've got just the ticket. Next month's lurid lineup includes the second part of Alan Jones' exhaustive career profile of exploitation king Pete Walker, plus a look at serial killers we have known and loved – from THE BOSTON STRANGER to HENRY! Then there's a jaunt through the history of the best selling Pan Books of Horror, interviews with Troma titan Lloyd Kaufman and delectable scream queen Sybil Danning, exclusive news from the set of the Stephen King/George Romero DARK HALF, and with a bit of luck you'll also find that long-promised photo feature on 50s monster movie maestro Bert I. Gordon. All that lot, plus the latest news and reviews of the horror scene worldwide makes THE DARK SIDE more fun than a night on the town with Ollie Reed (and at a mere £1.75 it's considerably cheaper). We're on sale at your local gruesagents from the 18th of April. Be there – or else we might have to come looking for you!





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We sent Big Frankie round to visit some of our fovourite video companies ond he came bock with a generous coffin-lood of gory giveoways to keep you frontic fiends hoppy when you're tucked up in the tomb during those horrible light evenings! Yes, you don't hove to be Khoris the Mummy to get wrapped up in this lot!



First of oll why not swot up on THE FLY series, which buzzes onto sell through video this month courtesy of CBS Fox. We're talking obout the originol 1958 clossic starring Yincent Price, its 1959 sequel RETURN OF THE FLY, the grisly new Dovid Cronenberg version of THE FLY, ond its even grislier sequel FLY II. We've got 10 complete sets to give oway, but you'll hove to supply your own Vopono!

Secondly, ofter reoding our HALLOWEEN feoture in this Issue you will no doubt want to check out the lotest instolments of this hit horror series. No problem, because thonks to the generous combined efforts of Braveworld (HALLOWEEN 4) and Copitol Home Yidea (HALLOWEEN 5), ten lucky winners will be able to win their own copy of each.





And lost but not leost those wonderful folk ot Virgin Video hove donoted ten copies of STEPFATHER 2 – MAKE ROOM FOR DADDY, o worthy sequel featuring o superb performance by Terry O'Quinn, AND ten copies of Dario Argento's mocabre mosterpiece TERROR AT THE OPERA – which is on obsolute must for ony horror buff's collection!

The choice is yours os to how you enter our creepy competition. You can either call in on our hellish British Terrorcom hotline (0898 – 345997) and onswer five questions obout recent horror releases, in which cose if you onswer correctly your name will go forward for inclusion in the prize draw collection. Or you con send o ghostcard to our editoriol address with a corny coption for the hair-raising picture below (token from TERROR AT THE OPERA thot will make us die loughing. Prizes will be split 50/50 between each entry method. All cassettes ore VHS only, ond os olwags the Ed's decision is open to bribery.



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THE DARK SIDE

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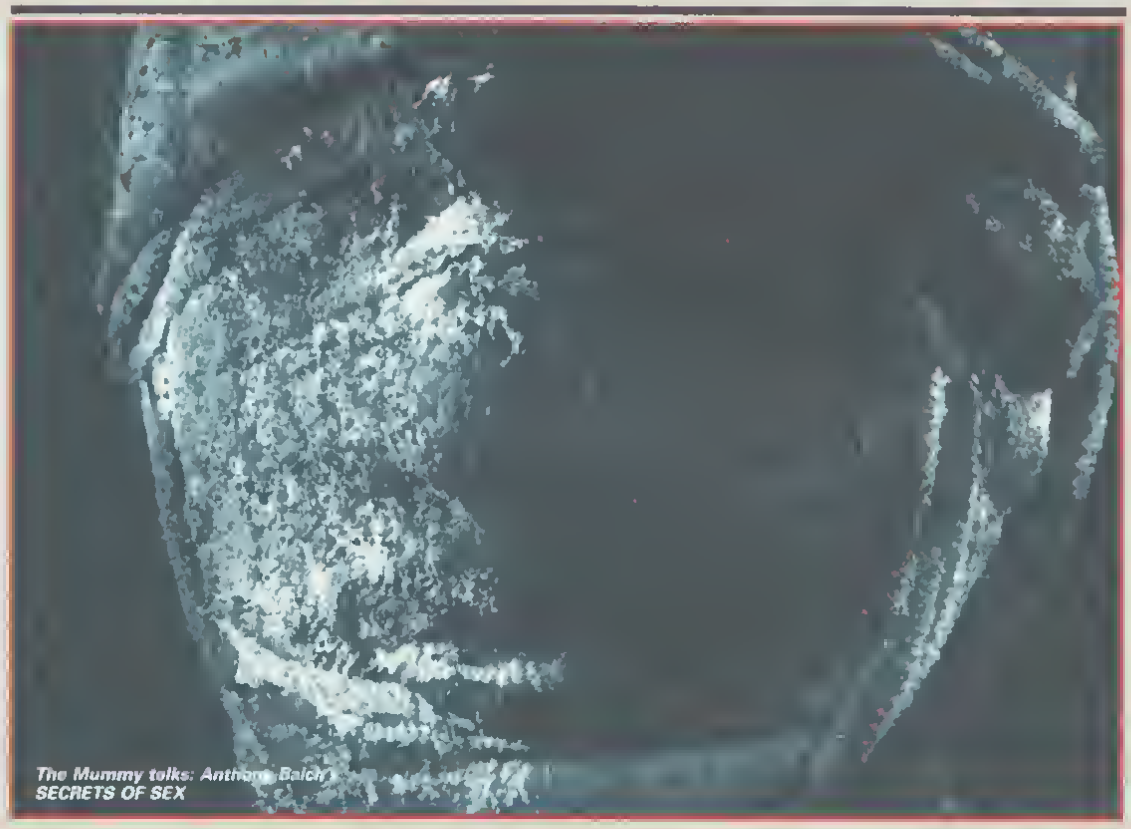


'THE LOUDEST PAGES EVER'

RICHARD TRILLO,
EDITOR OF THE
ROUGH GUIDE SERIES

THAT OLD BALCH MAGIC

From The Secrets of Sex to Horror Hospital, Colin Davis examines the brief but glorious career of Antony Balch



The Mummy talks: Anthony Balch's ***SECRETS OF SEX***

BFI STILLS

A naked blonde sits in a haystack, flanked by two naked studs. In tasteful slow motion they rise, and begin a sedate ring-a-roses dance. Over this titillating scene a title appears:

"Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man, did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?"
MILTON: Paradise Lost

Good question. You may ask it yourself, before this film is over. But here's The Prologue, a cautionary tale in sepulchral voice-over by dear old Valentine Dyall. A thousand years ago, in a vaguely Near East setting, an elderly judge, believing his wife has concealed a lover in a locked trunk, has it buried, unopened...

Who this? A mummy, that's who, evidently the buried lover, for the Dyall voice reverberates through the wrappings. How does a live lover, buried as is, become a fully wrapped mummy? Anyway, the mummy has watched the battle of the sexes over the centuries. "Since that first resounding defeat in the Garden of Eden, the male sex has not yet regained the initiative." While he philosophises, we watch a girl strip. "Imagine yourself making love to this girl." Similar exhortations follow, with closeups of other girls and boys. Then, a bunch of go-go girls stripping. Boos. Tomatoes are flung. Applause. *When the Saints Go Marching In* on the soundtrack. As battle commences, off we go to the first of six episodes.

An imperious lady photographer (Dorothy Grumbar) is taking pictures for a history of torture. The young man modelling the victim is being given a tough time, but is more intrigued than resentful. After some chat about pain, the lady says to her assistant, "Norma, go and get the Spanish Horse." (My God – not the *Spanish Hearse!*) Suspended by the wrists, the guy straddles a knife-edge, weights attached to his feet. He's getting worried. The ladies depart for lunch. Shots of them cutting steaks alternate with shots of the screaming victim. When they return, the photographer calmly snaps the mutilated corpse.

Second story: a young scientist (Yvonne Quenet) has a rich elderly businessman lover (Keenath Baoda). She enjoys his financial support but despises his enthusiasm and is bitter that her own valuable work is ill-paid. He thinks women are merely vessels for producing children, but believes he is too old to have the son he yearns for. She imparts the good news about fertility tests, which he's apparently never heard of, and they marry. When the son is born, it's a monster. The old man learns she was well aware she carried the defective gene responsible.

The next story is a bit more cheerful. A young man, first seen reading Genet, collars a



A man in a Michael Gough mask

burglar, who turns out to be a girl (Cathy Howard). Guess how she dissuades him from calling the law? Afterwards she carries on robbing, telling him the police won't believe him, but his wife might. During their lovemaking, the radio dispenses a fair parody of a Radio 3 talk.

Episode Four is lighter still. Lindy Leigh, an unlikely secret agent (Maria Frost – yum!) is detailed to steal papers from a foreign military attaché. Before the mission she visits the cinema and we see the film, *Bedroom Beauties of 1929*. Perhaps the best joke in the picture, this is a parody of a b & w silent, complete with piano accompaniment, starring Nicola Austine, like Frost and most of the other girls, a top nude model.

At a reception Lindy seduces the attaché, drugs him, and crawls into the wall safe after the papers. He was ahemming, and shuts her in the safe, where she meets all her predecessors – alive.

A quick word from Val the Mummy, then it's over to the flat of a gaunche, would-be trendy young man (Elliot Stein, also one of the writers), who's ringing for a call girl. Stepping Sue Bond arrives, and all goes well despite his awkwardness, until he opens a bedside cabinet. Sue screams: it's a big lizard. She won't have it off in front of those beady eyes, and leaves, though our man keeps insisting how groovy it would be. Leaving, Sue passes an old lady caressing a lizard.

Final story at last, folks. Genteel old lady Laurelle Streeter shows her new valet round the greenhouse with much chat about the birth and rebirth of the soul, illustrated by the pre-credits nudes.

The old girl reveals her secret: she trapped the souls of all her lovers in the flowers during sexual intercourse. All but one – who is of course the valet. "Misappropriation of mens' souls is a very serious crime," he says severely, and strangles her. Gardener's Question Time was never like this.



Here's ol' VD again, returning us to the go-go girls and gunmen.

"Opposing armies are disarmed and fall into an irresistible embrace." Cue for what seems endless softcore groping, accompanied by shots of exploding fireworks, that old standby of cinema symbolism.

"So it goes on," intones Bandage Man, "and on...and on...and on...". But luckily it doesn't, and we're back with the haystack trio. A spot more twirling, they sit down – still in slow motion – and that's it.

'Mind the doors' HORROR HOSPITAL



Antony Balch was hooked on exploitation movies before he was ten: *Mad Monster* and *Buried Alive* in Brixton, *Devil Bat* at the Princess, Buroham-on-Crouch. In 1951 he was taken backstage to meet Bela Lugosi, on his last tour here as Dracula. The adult Balch, whose tastes ran from *Shock Corridor* to *Easter Parade*, from Visconti to Jack Arnold, never forgot that "particular sensation in the intestines" when you saw something you weren't supposed to.

In the mid-1950's, working as a production assistant on shorts, teenage Balch made his first film, a thirty second TV ad for Kit-E-Kat: "Your cat will stay younger, live longer, on daily Kit-E-Kat." In 1957, while making a trailer for the British release of Fellini's *Cabiria*, he met the distributor and went to work for him. When the censor, John Trevelyan, proposed cutting lady mud-wrestling from a German film, Balch exclaimed, "That's the only erotic scene in the film, why do you want to cut that out?" Trevelyan told Balch's boss, "You really must tell your assistant not to come round saying things like in our office!"

After a slump at the production company, Balch worked on subtitles in Paris where, at Madame Raschoo's beat hotel, he met William Burroughs, who was to be an inspiration and a

colleborator. Balch's first ahort, *Towers Open Fire* (1963), was an 11 minute collage of Burroughs themes end situations. Society crumblea, the Stock Exchange crashes, Board members ere gunned down by commendoes (filmed in the BFI boardroom). Burroughs supplies soundlreck narration and appeers as a junkie. Finelly, there is en etteck from the skies while busineas papers drift through the countryaide. The censor removed merely some rude words; Critica tended to ignore Belch, treating the film aa a Burroughs item, bul apoke of "startling and witty" imeges

Also in 1963, Balch sew *Freaks*, end became e distributor in order to ehow it in London, where it had long been banned. When it opened (with Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie!*) the aupporting short was *Towers Open Fire*. In his other career aa a cineme programmer at the Times, Beker Street, Balch'a penchant for quirky pelring reaulted in such double bills es Bresson'a *Mouchette* with Lewton's *Isle of the Dead*. In 1975 he took lots of stick for selling Alain Jessua's borderline SF *Traitement de Choc* aa *The Doctor in the Nude*. But, he seid, over ten thousand saw the film, which would otherwise have flopped. Moreover, on the first run he supplied a subtitled original print rather than the dubbed veraion which had been gathering dual. He was the only Britlsh distribulor interested in Clair's lest film, *Les Fêtes Galantes*; "We shan'l make money, but lt's so beeutifully mede." Enjoying *Au Hesard Balthazar*, cenlred round a mistreeted donkey, he conaidered calling it *This Beast is not for Beating*. "A hint of fiagelletion can't do any harm at the box-office, can il?" He reisaued *Witchcraft Through the Ages*, releaaed *The Corpse Grinders* and *Don't Deliver Us From Evil*.

Meantime, his own film-making advanced slowly. After Towere Open Fire he made two more ahorts wlth Burroughs, so "Difficult" that he cul one of them from twenty minutea to eleven out of consideretion for the cineme steff. Plans for e feeture version of *The Naked Lunch* came to oothing end the first feeture waa *Secrets of Sex*, originally to be called *Eros Exploding*. Mr Trevelyan, muttering "Naaty stuff!" cut nine minutes. The critics, knowing Balch was more than a huxter, perhaps because they simply liked him, were surprisingly friendly: "Flair, resource, and a splendid Gothic dottiness" (*Guardian*); "Strenge and personal...e genuine end appealing oddity" (*Times*). *The Observer* thought it a bore, bul wasn't invited to the preview. Balch evidently didn't weste complimentaries.

The next and leat feature waa *Horror Hospital* (1973), en effectionete send-up of the conventional horror film. Judy (pretty Vanesse Shew) end Jeson (ugly Robin Askwith) are trepped in the isoleted heelth hotel of met Dr Storm (Michael Gough et his hammiest). His henchpersons include dwarf Frederick (Skip Martin, of *Circus of Fear* and *Masque of the Red Death*), ex-madam Olga (Ellen Pollock), end helmeted Cocteauesque motor-cycle thugs, one pleyed by Balch himself. Shown to their room (interiors shot in Battersea Town Hell), the kids pass en open door revealing a bed drenched in blood., "I hope you'll be tidier than the people who hed THAT room," remarks Fred.

The lnmates are brain-op zombies, controlled from a console by the doc, whose face turns out to be a Michael Gough mask concealing *House of Wax* type burns. His motives ere more reasoneble then most mad doctors': he hopes the progremmed girls will let him screw them, but it hasn't worked yet. A limo with fitted bladea decapitates would-be escapees ("Make e clean job of it, Frederick, the car was washed this morning.") Olge tries to opt out but never gets to finish packing.

Eventually the young folk escape, the Horror Hospital burns, and Storm is beheaded by his own Roller. Along the way we've been treated to violence, gore, e fight with a trensvestite, ripe dialogue, a little aex, and "gueat ster" Dennis Price, looking bemused but so would you if you'd been ecting in Jess Franco movies. He's e gey travel agent (Harry Holidays) who fancies Askwith (yecch!) end is very properly beheaded.

Again lhe "quality" papers were mostly kind: "Amusing mockery" (*Sunday Telegraph*); "Cheekily entertaining" (*Guardian*); "Hilerious extrevaganza" (*Sunday Times*). Dissenting were the *Sunday Expresa* ("an obscenity"), lhe *Daily Telegraph* ("sed comment on the need for good actors to act in tresh"), and the *Daily Express* ("Unheelthy horror. I've seen better filma floating on the aurface of a stagnant pond.") Some things never chenge.

Balch waa an ective campaigner against censorship, believing sex films were moatly bad beceuse censorship ellowed inept film-makers to promise without delivering. When *Straw Dogs* was under fir.e Balch wrote, "the cineme is not belng attacked by those conceroed with the welfare of society, but by people who further their careers by making a fuss." But he was realist enough to draft a auggested films ect to make censorship more retional if it hed to stay.

At a 1979 Xmas party a friend said, "Tony, you don't look too good – ere you all right?" "No," replied Balch, "Didn't you know? I'm dying." In April 1980 he died of cancer, eged 43. The obituaries paid little ettention to hia filma, concentreting on hls personal charm, kindneas, end humour. The *BFI News* apoke of his thoughtfulness in ensuring copies of all films he distribuled went lo the collection, end in willing his negetives to the archive.

Had he lived and obtained backing, what other films might he have made? Art films, no doubt, but probably some more overripe horror movies too. The man loved quality pictures and, wanting them to be seen, employed the techniques of the mea who merketed the exploitation movies he also loved. He had aomething lo say as a film-maker and, et any rete in the featurea, said it in terms of exploitation. Films, he aaid, should have one selling point, sn aa not to confuse the public. *Secrets of Sex* had aex, *Horror Hospital* had horror.

All Belch's films were isaued on video at one time or enother. How do the featurea stand up now? *Secrets of Sex* (on video under the US title *Bizarre*) sends up sex and art films, horror to some extent, but takes care to show aa much skin es its targets. The effective music score (in fact atock atuff from De Wolfe's) underlines the



The delightful Maria Frost

aatire, aometimes heevy-handedly. The sex, leughably tame now, seemed strongish in 1970 Britain, as did the horror content. The idea of the Spenish Horse still makes you wince and rross your legs, and the monster baby episode la, lf not acary, rather distasteful.

Thia brings me to a auggestion I wouldn't went to lebour, thal the film's attitude to women ia a little seddening. Look el the cherecters: e cheating wife, a sadlalic murderer, a girl who, tn spite a man, la prepared to carry e beer e monster, a manipulative sexual eggreaaor, a comle alr-head, a call-girl, and e woman who stole men's soula during sex. However, Belch's besic good nature does come through, and except for one episode, *Secrets* is fun, end certainly interesting. When I saw it in the cinema, to my disgust the Lindy Leigh eplsode was miaaing, but it's on the video. If you're out there, Marie Frost, I still love you!

SECRETS OF SEX. GB 1970 Prod & Dir: Antony Balch. Scr: Martin Locke, John Eliot, Maureen Owen, Elhot Stein, Antony Belch. With: Kenneth Bende, Dorothy Grumbar, Yvonne Quenet, Cathy Howard, Mike Briton, Laurelle Streeter, Nicola Austine, Meria Frost, Elilat Stein.

HORROR HOSPITAL. GB. 1973. Dir: Antony Balch. Prod: Richard Gordon. Scr: Anlony Balch, Alan Walaon. With: Michael Gough, Robin Askwith, Veneasa Shaw, Ellen Pollock, Skip Martin, Dennis Price.

Brain transplants gone wrong: HORROR HOSPITAL



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Dark Visions

Richard Marshall tunes in on all the latest ramblings from Horrorwood...

ARNIE TERMINATES HIS BAD GUY IMAGE!

Reports emanating from the set of the $60 million Carolco production of TERMINATOR 2 JUDGEMENT DAY suggest that fans are in for a bit of a shock when they tune in to the further adventures of their favourite killer cyborg. Big Arnie Schwarzenegger is back in the lead role but this time out he's playing the good guy!

The first TERMINATOR movie set Arnie on the path to stardom but nowadays the big man doesn't want to tarnish his heroic image even though the pay cheque an offer isn't too shabby by anyone's standards (Carolco anted up a slightly used Gulfstream G-III luxury airplane valued at some $14 million!) The original TERMINATOR was a huge boxoffice hit earning $18 million profit on a relatively small ($6 million) investment. The anticipated sequel has taken seven years to materialise during which time writer/director James Cameron has given us ALIENS and THE ABYSS and Arnie has became a true megastar in a string of boxoffice hits ranging from COMMANDO to TOTAL RECALL. In this one Arnie plays a good Terminator who helps protect Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) and her 12-year-old son from the deadly Key 1000 on ultra-sophisticated robot played by Robert Patrick (star of the low-budget TERMINATOR rip-off FUTURE HUNTER). A vast visual effects and makeup crew supervised by Stan Winston (who created Schwarzenegger's makeup on the original) and Gene Warren will create the film's ambitious futuristic setting of Los Angeles 2029 where a fierce war of man against machines still rages. The film opens on July 4th in America and in the UK shortly afterwards. See you in the queue.

HAMMER HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE – IN IOWA!

If you're a Hammer fan (and you surely must be if you read THE DARK SIDE) then you'd be well advised to pick up a copy of LITTLE SHOPPE OF HORRORS a wonderful American fanzine produced as a labour of love by lifelong Hammer fan Richard Klemensen. The latest bumper edition (a fact-filled 170 pages) contains a detailed look at the making of Hammer's atmospheric 1963 KISS OF THE VAMPIRE as well as such esoteric treats as Randall Larsen's in-depth examination of Hammer music scores, a survey of unfilmed Hammer projects and interviews with the likes of Andree Melly (George's sister) John Carson, Tharley Walters, Linda Hayden and Jenny Hanley. The contents page states that LSOH is not an authorised publication of Hammer Film Productions, but it certainly should be because I can't imagine anyone ever doing a better job.

Issue 12 should be out later this year and will include a tribute to the late Sir James Carreras and a series of interviews with Hammer's glamorous leading ladies. You should be able to pick up a copy from any specialist sci-fi/horror bookshop or alternatively write to Dick at P.O. Box 3107, Des Moines, Iowa 50316 U.S.A.



IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HEARSE?

The unstoppable Larry (MANIAC COP) Cohen is back in town with an imaginative new horror flick called THE AMBULANCE. To be released shortly by Entertainment In Video. It exploits our basic fear of the medical profession in a unique fashion with a terrifying tale of an ambulance that picks up people for a more sinister purpose than just taking them to hospital. Cohen says he got the inspiration for the film when he suffered a bad attack of indigestion and was rushed to an emergency ward. You're never more helpless than when you're strapped down in one of those stretchers. You don't know what they're sticking into your arm or what they're doing to you. The film tells of a comic book illustrator (Eric Roberts) who spots the girl of his dreams (Janine Turner) only to have her whisked away from under his nose by a mysterious ambulance. When Roberts is unable to locate her at any hospital he begins an investigation that leads to a whole host of sinister disappearances and also puts his own life in danger. Explains Cohen. It's not a picture about an ambulance that drives around by itself like THE CAR or CHRISTINE. It's more of a Hitchcock film. It's a comedy with suspense. It's like Kafka – everybody seems to be part of a conspiracy. In other words just because you're paranoid it doesn't mean they aren't out to get you!



MORE FROM THE MAINE MAN!

Fed up with Stephen King movies already? Well you ain't seen nothing yet. While we wait for MISERY (the most literate and enjoyable adaptation of a King story to date) GRAVEYARD SHIFT (routine monster stuff) and THE DARK HALF (an unknown quantity) Warner get in first by releasing the four-hour Stephen King mini-series IT on video. Directed by Tommy Lee Wallace (of HALLOWEEN III fame) this lavish but overlong adaptation of King's 1986 novel tells the story of seven friends who stage a reunion 30 years after a fateful childhood encounter with an evil force that appears to them as a circus clown. It has some chilling moments but runs out of steam at the end. The cast includes Richard Thomas (John Boy of THE WALTONS) John Ritter and Annette O'Toole and we'll be reviewing it in next month's issue.

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Let's hear it for one of the most eagerly awaited thriller flicks of recent years. THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS. Jonathan Demme's by-all-accounts-splendid movie adaptation of the Thomas Harris bestseller. Jodie Foster stars as an FBI agent-in training who rather foolishly enlists the help of the brilliant enigmatic sicko Hannibal The Cannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) to help her get inside the mind of the serial killer she is tracking down. A sequel of sorts to Michael Mann's brilliant MANHUNTER. If it's one tenth as good as the novel then this is going to be one helluva scary movie – and those who have seen it insist that it is! Mint sauce anybody?

WYRD SISTERS LIVE ON STAGE!

Fans of the weird wonderful and very amusing Discworld novels of Terry Pratchett will be delighted to discover that one of the series WYRD SISTERS is to be presented on stage by special permission of Terry Pratchett himself. The Oxford Studio Theatre Club will be staging the play on the 15th to the 18th of May at the picturesque Unicorn Theatre in Abingdon. The characters you'll find in this ambitious production include a trio of witches and assorted dwarfs demons, torturers ghosts and bandits. It is hoped that Pratchett himself will attend the first night and if you want to be there too then you'd better get your skates on and call 0865 69625.

CELLULOID SNIPPETS

There are plenty of intriguing genre movies coming our way in 1991. Kicking off with Woody Allen's ALICE a rare excursion into dark fantasy by the neurotic comedy genius (actually perhaps it's not so rare when you consider that Woody has also given us SLEEPER, THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO and ZELIG). Anyway this one involves a transparent ghost an invisibility potion and a scene where two of the characters fly round Manhattan. Alec Baldwin and William Hurt star alongside Allen regular Mia Farrow and the film is currently scheduled to open in the UK in June. Also in the fantasy mould the big budget ROBIN HOOD PRINCE OF THIEVES is apparently quite a departure from the Richard Greene series some of us oldsters remember with great fondness. Advance reports suggest it's chock-full of special effects and plays like a Star Wars epic. Kevin Costner stars in that one while the less ambitious ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD features MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON star Patrick Bergin as the hooded man. This one will be shown theatrically over here but go straight to TV in the States. Also upcoming ALIEN III (at last!) directed by David Fincher and featuring a bald-headed Sigourney Weaver. DEAD AGAIN (Kenneth Branagh in a self-directed macabre private eye story) THE FISHER KING (Terry Gilliam strikes again with a medieval fantasy tale starring Jeff Bridges and Robin Williams – MUNCHAUSEN 2?) POINT BREAK (Patrick Swayze and Gary Busey star as FBI agents in a tense thriller directed by NEAR DARK's Kathryn Bigelow). PREDATOR 2 (Is Danny Glover a suitable replacement for Big Arnie?) TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES II (More pizza-scoffing mayhem as the tuned-in terrapins take on New York's notorious Foot gang) VALKENVANIA (Dan Aykroyd directs Chevy Chase and Demi Moore in a surreal comedy about a yuppie couple who get trapped in a nightmare world) and A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 6 – with Roseanne Barr and Johnny Depp!



COMIC Crypt

Heh! Heh! Heh! Are you sitting comfortably, kiddies? Then let Allan Bryce be your guide in a tribute to the fabulous E.C., horror comics of the fearful 50s...

The story goes that in 1954 E C comic book publisher William M Gaines was called before a Senate Sub Committee where an irate politician held up the current edition of Gaines bestselling *SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES* and said This seems to be a man with a bloody axe holding a woman s head up which has been severed from her body Do you think that s in good taste?

Yes sir answered Gaines I do for the cover of a horror comic A cover in bad taste might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the blood could be seen dripping from it.

A New Trend In Comic Books was the way Gaines Entertaining Comics described themselves during their brief but memorable 50s heyday Ironically, E C had previously stood for Educational Comics and published titles like PICTURE STORIES FROM THE BIBLE But when Max Gaines was killed in a motorboat accident in 1947 his son William inherited the company and took it into an altogether more commercial area with hard-hitting crime and war comics

In December of 1949 the horror began It started when writer and artist Al Feldstein sent in a script entitled THE CRYPT OF TERROR a terrifying tale told by a rotting cadaver known as The Crypt Keeper the same month a companion title called THE VAULT OF HORROR introduced The Vault Keeper The enthusiastic response from readers encouraged Feldstein and Gaines to immediately launch a further title called THE HAUNT OF FEAR this one hosted by a cackling crone known as The Old Witch

While other comic book companies expounded the triumph of good over evil EC travelled a reverse route down a darker road where unimaginable terrors lurked in almost every frame of the ruled panel borders and there was never any redemption in the (usually brutally ironic) climax Inevitably the worst would always be saved for that final blood-soaked image His eyes were torn out and in their place were The next morning they found what was left of Chief Miller His arms and legs had been severed from his body and his torso nearly split in two What was once Sidney was now no more than a confused reorganisations of Sidney s dismembered body– The upside-down head hanging from the left hip sobbing The left leg sewn to the left shoulder

Nobody could realise the twisted dementia of EC s world more accurately than Graham Ingels an artist who signed his name as Ghastly (the nickname given him on the letters pages by appreciative readers) Ingels drawings of The Old Witch were classics of the macabre, unequalled in horror comicdom But after the fall of EC he was to vanish as mysteriously as he had appeared on the scene in the first place Above the signature of his story for the very last issue of HAUNT OF FEAR is the word Farewell And farewell it was because Ingels was never to be heard from again

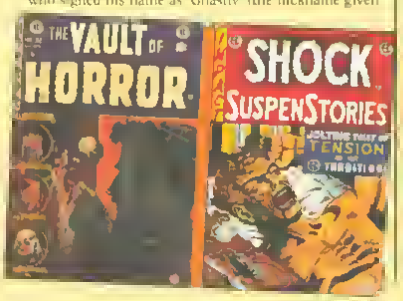
Of course children were the traditional target audience of the comic book trade and it was this that was to eventually cause E C s downfall As Gaines and his ever increasing army of bloodthirsty illustrators strove to reach new peaks of grotesque gore the rumblings of discontented parents could soon be heard not only throughout the USA, but in England as well The story 'Foul Play' was brought to the attention of the UK parliament when an irate MP stood up in the House waving a copy of THE HAUNT OF FEAR and describing its despicable plot about a baseball team who take revenge on a cheating player by dismembering him and using 'his long strings of pulpy intestines to mark the base lines



Gaines was forced to submit to censorship only once in 1953 when the cover of the August edition of VAULT OF HORROR had a meat cleaver removed from a walking corpse s head But a year later he was up in front of the Senate and the writing was on the wall with the proposed formation of a Comics Code to stamp out the more controversial elements that had been creeping into the field It was a case of E C come – E C Go!

Gaines began to editorialise that this was all a dirty Communist plot But he knew that he was beaten, and in October of 1954 all five of his successful horror titles (TALES FROM THE CRYPT VAULT OF HORROR, HAUNT OF FEAR, SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES and CRIME SUSPENSTORIES) carried an IN MEMORIAM column in which the publisher lamented You may never read this magazine For that matter this magazine may never be printed If it IS printed it may never be distributed If it IS distributed it may be kept in a bundle behind the counter and never see the light of day Naturally with comic magazine censorship now a fact we at E C look forward to an immediate drop in the crime and juvenile delinquency rate of the United States

This of course did not happen But neither did the E C horror comics fade into obscurity The English company Amicus Films made two successful movies from them (TALES FROM THE CRYPT and VAULT OF HORROR) in the early 70s and a new big-budget American television series of TALES FROM THE CRYPT is on its way to haunt us anew with stories of grisly Santas who carry bits of their chopped up victims in their Christmas sacks All, of course in the best possible taste –



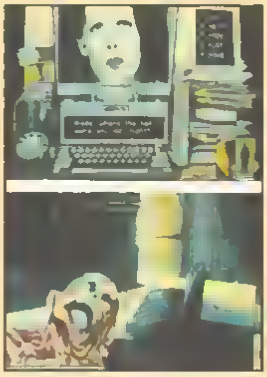


COMPUTER SLAYGROUND

What's new an the camputer screen scene? David Shrew grabs his joystick and investigates the latest in 16-bit screamers...

The name's Hunter William Blade Hunter He's an ex-cop part-time P I and full-time cynic His beat is Los Angeles In the year 2D53 It's a rough town Crime is so rampant that you need to wear a bulletproof vest just to pick your milk up from the doorstep! The only people making a good living are drug dealers and bent government officials But things are about ta change because the mayor's daughter has ODd and Hunter has been called in ta track down those responsible before the smelly brown stuff really hits the fan

That's the scenario af RISE OF THE DRAGON an intriguing new role playing adventure from Sierra which allaws yau ta play private eye through a clever series of multiple choice screen selections You progress through the mouse-controlled game by clicking on various onscreen icons, and whether you get anywhere at not is down to your skill at questioning witnesses and following up on vital clues In a navel twist it's also up ta you whether you choose to play Hunter as a Dirty Harry type tough guy, a sleazy lowlife or a clean-cut officer of the law The graphics are superb, done in a 5Ds pulp style and even the uninitiated will get a kick out of the game because it's not the son of thing where you can accidentally wipe out the main character with one foolish move You also get a couple of decent arcade-style action sequences which allaw you ta take an the bad guys in mortal combat at the end The ane drawback is that it's not

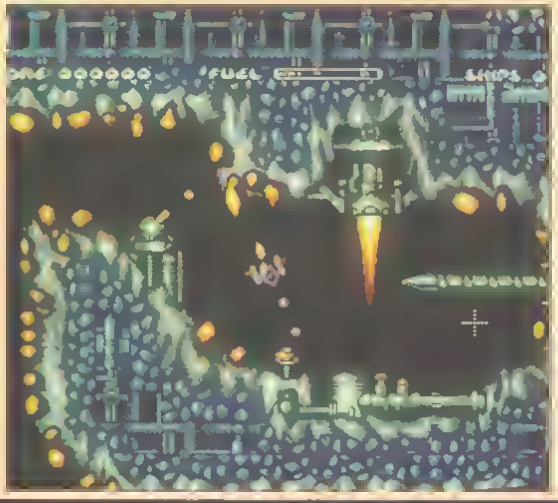


a particularly complex game ta master and ance you've cracked the case (although there are one or two alternative solutions) the interest drops off pretty quickly Still at £24 99 (plus expenses?) it should keep mystery fans happy for quite a few hours Let's be generous and give it eight out of ten

Next we blast off into the forreaches of auter space with Hewson's ZARATHRUSTA This puts you in the bucket seat of a tiny spacecraft an a mission ta locate and collect some rare crystals an the surface of a number of heavily defended planets Using a limited supply of fuel you have to battle your way through various perils and negotiate twisty underground cavems in arder ta complete your mission successfully Alang the way you can pick up a vast number of bonus points by taking out the planet's nuclear reactar and causing the whole shebang to self-destruct – just make sure you leave yourself enough time to get out before the screen falls ta pieces round yaur ears! This is a very simple space-bound shoot-em-up with some fairly interesting planetary landscapes that range from dense jungle areas to icy wastes As I mentioned before, your fuel is limited so a certain amount of thaught must be put into whether you should stay and fight or just grab the crystals and run It's good fun once you've mastered the ship controls but too simple in concept and execution to stay at the top of your playing list for more than a week ar two It's currently anly available an the Amiga format and gets a six out of ten – beam me up Scotty



Computer game graphics have progressed a fair old way from those old tennis games I used to play in my youth! If any proof were needed take a look at WRATH OF THE DEMON from Abstrax This corker of a sword and sorcery yarn features over 60D screens of amazing action and brings you into conflict with na less than 12D different monsters! Okay so the plot is the usual nonsense about a warrior sent ta slay a demon threatening the king's realm But that can be overlooked because the game is so richly atmospheric composed as it is af a series af gorgeous Disney-esque scenes each of which require you ta fulfil some heroic task These usually involve hacking away at some huge monster (the hilariously goggle eyed dragon is a particular treat) and scooping up magic potions that make you invulnerable for three seconds No deep thinking is necessary here and though some af the gameplay is repetitive It's enough of a cartoony treat to appeal to all fans of fun arcade action A big nine out of ten Set aside quite a few hours for this one – you'll want ta keep going back for more





FLESH BLOOD

Alan Jones profiles the colourful career of exploitation movie legend Pete Walker

He jets around the world in his own private plane, buying and selling property in the *glitterati* playgrounds of the rich and famous. He's a multi-millionaire with the Midas touch when it comes to real estate wheeling and dealing. He's never seen in anything less than Armani or without a Page 3 pin-up on his arm – dates he terms 'Rent-a-Scrubber'. He's Playboy Pete Walker who, for a brief shining moment in the Seventies, directed a number of controversial 'Terror' films, each with a morally obscene slant, and was dubbed the saviour of British horror for his twisted insolence.

Over the years I've written a lot about Pete Walker's illustrious, if slapdash career. I thought the chapter had been well and truly closed. But with rumours circulating that he's about to make his oft-delayed comeback, and with a fresh insight on his unique body of work supplied by his longtime scriptwriter, journalist David McGillivray, I figured it was an appropriate time for a retrospective, with a new perspective, on a favourite cult director of mine.



EARLY BEGINNINGS

The son of Syd Walker, the popular comic monologuist of radio's 'Band Wagon', Peter left Brighton for London in the Fifties hoping to follow in his father's footsteps. His first major appearance as a stand-up comedian was, according to McGillivray, 'Probably at Collins' music-hall in Islington. For as long as I've known him he's insisted that it was a Wednesday night, second house, before he got his first laugh".

Continuing to tread the boards with a distinct lack of success, Walker moved into repertory, then played bit parts in films although his only confirmed cameo is in Michael Winner's 1962 short BEHAVE YOURSELF. "It was terrible, a dreadful actor" says Walker about his early days in showbusiness. Then he became heavily involved in the production of 'glamour' films – nudie-cutie home movies readily available in every newsagents during the mid-Sixties. Walker made over four hundred titles for the Heritage range. "All terrible, all shot within half an hour" he says, and although he arrived late on the soft-core porn scene, (Harrison Marks had preceded him by four years), he made enough money to finance his first feature length movie.

AND FRIGHTMARES

VIOLENCE AND ANTISEPTIC SEX

I LIKE BIRDS (1966), (titled FOR MEN ONLY Stateside with extra scenes added), was shot in six days, cost £6,740, and was a seedy comedy about the head of an East Grinstead puritan group leading a double life as a sex magazine editor. Then came the crude gangster melodrama STRIP POKER/THE BIG SWITCH (1967), written between seven o'clock one night and two the following morning. Next was SCHOOL FOR SEX (1968) which McGillivray called, "A humourless comedy about a divorcee teaching girls to swindle rich men to return for 10% of their takings. It led me to write, 'It's hard to see how anybody in their right minds could let Walker anywhere near a camera'". But it became one of Walker's biggest international success and McGillivray was soon forced to eat his own words in a spectacular fashion. MAN OF VIOLENCE (1969) followed and was in Walker's opinion, "A gloopy Hollywood thriller made for 3½p with the necessary ingredients – Luan Peters' 42" bust and a bit of blood".

"In retrospect I think CAROL is probably the best British sex film ever made."

Then came the turning point in Walker's seemingly pedestrian career. The year was 1971 and McGillivray was the assistant editor of the BFI's 'Monthly Film Bulletin'. He recalled, "I was annoyed by a review describing Walker's latest sex flick COOL IT CAROL as 'beguilingly good-humoured'. But when I saw the picture myself I found to my astonishment he was right. In retrospect I think CAROL is probably the best British sex film ever made".

Walker had been asked to consider a 1½ page rough synopsis by scriptwriter Murray Smith based on a story he'd read in the previous Sunday's 'News of the World'. McGillivray continued, "It concerned two teenagers who had gone astray after being attracted to the bright lights of the big city; the girl had become a prostitute and the boy was arrested for living off her immoral earnings. Sensibly scripted by Smith, efficiently photographed by Peter Jessop, (who went on to become sexploitation's most sought-after cameraman), and generally well-performed, although Robin Askwith overacts, CAROL is a self-aware sex-comedy, slick and witty. It can now be seen as a true reflection of the change in moral standards at the turn of the Seventies although it was despised by contemporary critics".

"I'm actually quite conservative really. I've always believed in antiseptic sex. I hate tits...horrible things."

COOL IT CAROL was perhaps the pinnacle reached by the British sex film industry. This cheap and very lucrative field then started moving towards the hardcore porn areas to America and everyone had to follow suit to ensure their investment would see a healthy return. "And I just wasn't interested", complained Walker, "I'm actually quite conservative really. I've always believed in antiseptic sex. I hate tits...horrible things. I do believe in censorship as I think movies can deprave and corrupt. It's all a question of taste. I have stretched censorship to its limits and, although many critics won't agree with me, I think I've always been on the side of good taste". For these reasons Walker looked around for a new genre to mine and settled on a borderline suspense thriller again written by Smith. And without anyone fully understanding the future implications, DIE SCREAMING MARIANNE (1971) set Walker on the terror-filled course he was to become synonymous with.

THE NEW BRITISH HITCHCOCK?

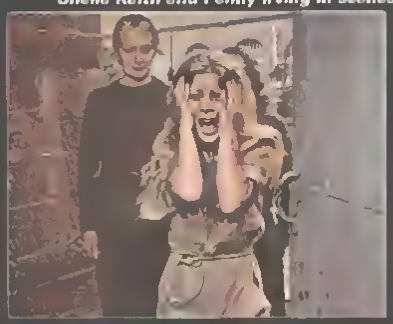
Shot on location in Portugal's Algarve, where Walker owned a luxurious villa, DIE SCREAMING MARIANNE starred Susan George and Barry ('Mind Your Language') Evans. It concerned the efforts of Marianne's father, "The Judge', to extract from his daughter the number of his late wife's Swiss bank account. Not only does it contain £700,000 but also damning evidence of his corrupt practices while in office. Virtually everyone dies, either by method or accident, yet what can be

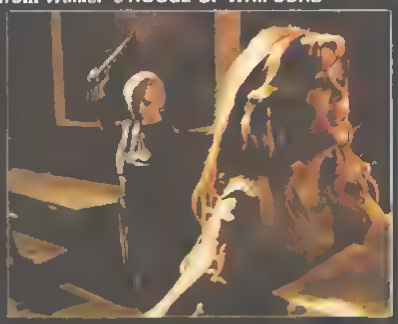


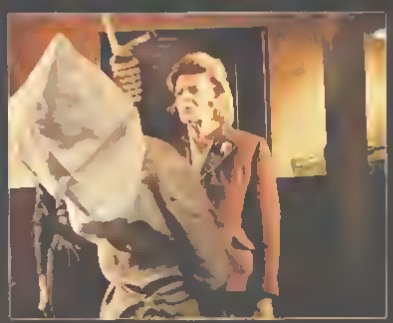


perceived through the incomprehensible plot are the recurring themes that would crop up in Walker's later classics: the death of the personable hero, the predatory half-sister, the weak male as opposed to the more obviously dominant female sex. Although only vaguely tense and ominous, DtE SCREAMtNG MARIANNE confirmed Walker's potential as a low-budget stylist. It's undisputed set piece has Evans trapped in a seedy Soho apartment not realising the two policemen questioning him are really villains in disguise. This sequence is very Hitchcockian in execution but as Walker, who is a great Hitch admirer and would later be dubbed "The new British Hitchcock" by the press, said, "We are only doing what the master did 20 years ago. It isn't just Brian De Palma who's guilty – we all are!"

Sheila Keith and Penny Irving in scenes from Walker"s HOUSE OF WHIPCORD









A GIRL IN YOUR LAP

It was at this time that McGillivray and Walker met through a mutual friend, Britieh sexploiter Rey Selfe hed asked McGilliivray to rewrite a feature he wae producing – ALBERT'S FOLLIES, renamed WHITE CARGO, starring Oavid Jason – and they were finally introduced. Invited to wetch OtE SCREAMING MARIANNE being filmed, McGillivray asked Walker if he would consent to a lengthy interview for an in-depth career feature. That subsequent article was to appear three years later in 'Films and Filming' magazine just after his first screenpiay for Walker, HOUSE OF WHIPCORD, had opened in London. But their partnership was still in the future when Welker went back to his rude roots in 1972 to direct THE FOUR OIMENSIONS OF GRETA. Welker had found a camere mouldering away in the corner nf an oid studio and was delighted to discover it could be used in the anaglyph proceas of 3-O filming where audiences wore cardboard glasses with red and green plastic lenses to anjoy the stereoscopic effects. Leena Skoog played the missing permiesive Germen *au pair* whoee kinky degredation in the fieshpots of backstreet London is revealed via four 3-D fiashbacks.

"At the height of the mayhem in GRETA, Walker had the hero exclaim, 'This is just like a very cheap British sex film!'"

Hyped with the tag line 'A girl in your lap', although McGillivray is certain Walker originally tried pushing 'A boob in your lap' through the advertising approval committee, the blurred peep ehow's attempts tn project Skoog's endowments over heads of the dirty raincoat brigade proved a buge, and surprising, box-office winner. So much so that Weiker used the gimmick again for the climax of THE FLESH ANO BLOOO SHOW (1972) scripted by Alfred Shaughnessy.

One black and white flashback explained who, or whet, wae murdering the out of work actors assembled together in an Old Dark seaside pier theatre. What blood there wae in the Agatha Christie inspired plot was dissipated by the obligetory flesh content end some appalling continuity. But as unfulfilled as Walker's old-fashioned whodunnit is, one can now see THE FLESH AND BLOOO SHOW as the logical step toward the grand guignol efforts waiting in the wings. McGillivray commented, "Walker's increasingly tongue-in-cheek iotensity set both movies apart from run-of-the-mill sexploitation. Both plots are ludicrous but knowingly camped up. At the height of the mayhem in GRETA, Walker had the hero



Susan George and Barry Evans in DIE SCREAMING MARIANNE

asclaim, 'This is just like a very cheap British sex film!' Such fun at the expense of the earnest British punter was not common in 1972".

RITUAL FLOGGING IN THE FOREST OF DEAN

Walker then tried a more sophisticated approach to sas comedy with TIFFANY JONES (1973), an adaptation of the famous newspaper comic strip. But the leaden script doomed the movie to second feature playoff and Walker realised he would have to change tack completely if he was to survive in the faltering and rapidly evolving British film industry. The result of his new thinking and altered direction was the sado-masochistic suspense masterpiece HOUSE OF WHIPCORD (1974).

McGillivray explained WHIPCORD's genesis: "Walker took the Roger Corman approach visualising the poster campaign first, (a through the noose shot of a screaming girl), then filched the construction of PSYCHO, (killing off the heroine when audiences least expected it), and commissioned ten pages of dialogue from Alfred Shaugnessy. "He wasn't happy with the treatment though and asked if I would like to script it – with the accent on fast. I was paid £200! But in all honesty, I was so excited, I would have paid him for the chance! I contributed nothing to the storyline whatsoever, wrote it in two weeks, and by sheer accident it turned out superbly. I say accident because there was no reason why it should have worked as well as it did. It was my big break, the first horror movie I'd ever written, it was Walker's first pure horror film, and he used all mainly untried actors. It's the only Walker movie I wrote I can still watch without embarrassment".

McGillivray played a photographer in HOUSE OF WHIPCORD which cost £60,000 to make and was shot in three weeks using exteriors in the Forest of Dean and a disused South London lunatic asylum for the prison interiors. It tells of how nude model Anne-Marie, (Penny 'Are You Being Served' Irving), becomes imprisoned in an unofficial correction centre manically run by the insane Mrs Wokehurst using her blind husband, a retired Justice of the Peace, as a pawn to ensure that all the kidnapped inmates are eventually condemned to death. Each loose-moraled victim faces solitary confinement, followed by ritual flogging, then inescapable death by hanging. The nail-biting tension mounts due to Walker's cleverly disguised trick beginning and the horror comes, not from the more explicit corrective scenes, but from our sympathies with Irving, and the fact that anybody could get hopelessly caught up in such a tangibly real situation beyond their control.

HOUSE OF WHIPCORD was the movie in which Walker's discovery, actress Sheila Keith, made her shattering debut as warden Walker, the epitome of perverted evil. McGillivray added, "Sheila's character name wasn't a jokey comment at Walker's expense as far as I know. That was her name in Shaugnessy's original treatment. Peter never did have a sense of humour about himself so it was probably just an accident. But then Patrick Barr's judge was named Bailey, as in 'Old', so I can't be sure...".

> "Peter's one man band operation gave each movie a lovely atmosphere. He felt his work was only a success of people left the cinema halfway through clutching their stomachs."

Walker said, "I knew Sheila's work and asked her if she'd be interested in the part. It was as simple as that. I had no idea she would have such an impact because she never needed much direction from me". Keith's TV sitcom background gave no early indication she would for a short while become the most detested villainess in British horror history. From 'The Liver Birds' to her most recent appearance in VENUS PETER, the four movies she made for Walker stand out as aberrations and very strange career choices for the actress. She said at the time, "I'd never done anything like play this frightening prison wardeness creature before. But I thought I'd have a crack at it. Every part was a different challenge but Peter's one man band operation gave each movie a lovely atmosphere. He felt his work was only a success of people left the cinema halfway through clutching their stomachs". Walker himself remarked, "I have good story concepts and WHIPCORD was my best. Modern Gothic stories are what I prefer as there is more horror to be had out of people's minds. Normal people who behave abnormally is the common denominator in all my films".



MURDER IN MUSWELL HILL

'What turns a normal person into a mass murder?' That's just one of the questions posed by Fhiona Louise in her debut feature THE COLD LIGHT OF DAY. Allan Bryce interviews a talented young filmmaker with a fascination for the dark side of the human psyche...

In 1983, the drains overflowed outside the North London home of social worker Dennis Nilsen. The plumber called in to unblock them made a grisly discovery: they were stuffed with shredded human flesh from bits of dismembered human bodies that had been flushed down the toilet inside the house. Within hours, the mild-mannered Nilsen had confessed to the wilful murder of fifteen young men, and ensured himself a life sentence – and a place in the record books as the foremost mass murderer in British history...

Now Nilsen's macabre story has been brought to the screen in a powerful and disturbing movie called THE CDLD LIGHT DF DAY, which marks the impressive directorial debut of 22 year-old painter and actress Fhiona Louise. The film lives up to its title by being a chilling affair indeed. It opens at dawn in a dingy London flat with Nilsen (played by Bob Flag) taking off his tie to strangle one of the city's misfits, who he has lured home with the promise of a hot meal and a bed for the night. As the improvised narrative progresses, his shabby apartment becomes ever more littered with dismembered bodies. But Louise makes no moral judgements. The pickups, strangulations, mutilation and necrophilia are shown with a dispassionate air, and we end up feeling strangely sorry for Nilsen, a lonely man who is a prisoner of his own twisted desires.

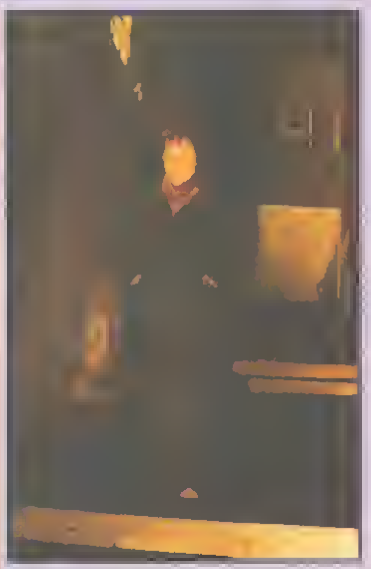
Fhiona Louise



We're sitting in the Wardour Street offices of the film's distributors, River First Productions. Fhiona is stylishly dressed in a man's business suit that serves to accentuate her feminine appeal. Her finely drawn features and model-girl figure would seem on the surface to be better suited to a position in front of the camera than behind it. But THE COLD LIGHT DF DAY proves she is definitely far more than just a pretty face.

My first question is predictable: What's a pretty young blonde doing getting involved with a project like this? 'Because I'm rather fascinated with murder,' she answers apologetically. 'Isn't everybody?' Fhiona was just 16 when the papers first carried the grisly details of the Nilsen case. 'A close friend of mine knew one of the victims very well,' she says. 'This guy was a hopeless drug addict. My friend had taken him off the streets, but he wasn't trained as a social worker and couldn't cope with someone who was on hard drugs. So basically he had to let him go. Then, a year or more later he learned that the boy had been murdered by Dennis Nilsen. He just went to pieces, and it was getting him to face up to things that led to my fascination with the case.'

At some point she sat down and wrote a 14-page script synopsis, which she showed to Richard Driscoll, an enterprising young producer who was auditioning for an acting job. He was



Bob Flag as Nilsen

impressed enough to raise the finance and within a short while the film was in production. 'I was very lucky,' she says with commendable understatement. 'I don't think anybody else would have let me make the film as it is, because it's definitely not a commercial project.'

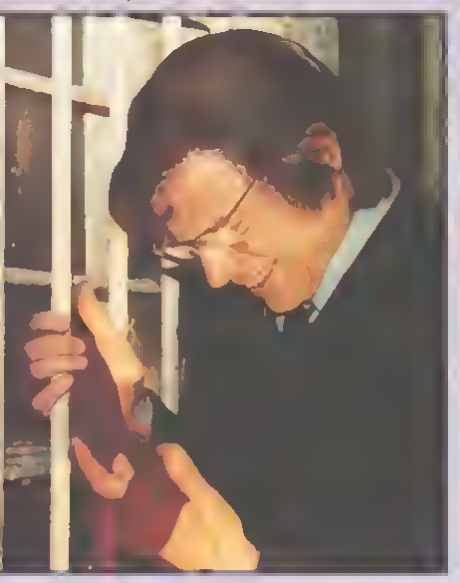
Brought up in Berkshire, Fhiona began auditioning for acting parts as a teenager, and at 17 went to the famous Strasbourg School in France, which she says was 'full of rich kids who didn't really want to act at all.' Returning to England she nabbed a small role in a short film called SLEEPWALKER. On balance she admits, 'I would much rather be a director than an actress, mainly because you have so much control. Besides. The way I look I have to be very careful choosing acting roles. I'm certainly not interested in playing dumb blondes' (What she is interested in is changing peoples's perceptions of Dennis Nilson's crimes.) 'I'm not a political person,' she says earnestly, 'but I got so



The Cold Light of Day – Nilsen claims another victim

sngry with the way the Nileen etory was hsndled in the prese. All the lessons thst could hsve been learoed from it just didn't eeem to be. That wae proved to me when we were filmking on the South Bank. The smount of homelese there wss just incredible. It was like eomething from the tbird world. Of course rstber thsn concentrating on the eort of poverty that led tbeee people into Nilsen's clutches, the tabloide preferred to run headlinee like 'Commie Bastard Kills 17!'

In the film the Nilsen character ie csIled Jorden Flsg, and the body count has been reduced to four, representing a broad croes section of the sctual victims. 'It wssn't ever mesnt to be s documentary,' explains Fhions. 'It was my exploration, snd what t was trying to do wss ssk queetione rather than eupply easy answere. In fact it etarted off that I didn't even want people to recognise him ae Nileen. But everybody that ssw it, from the cutting room up, knew who he wss. Bob (Flsg) doesn't look at sll like Nileen In real life, but once he got in front of the camera he underwent an incredible transformation snd could slmost be his double.'



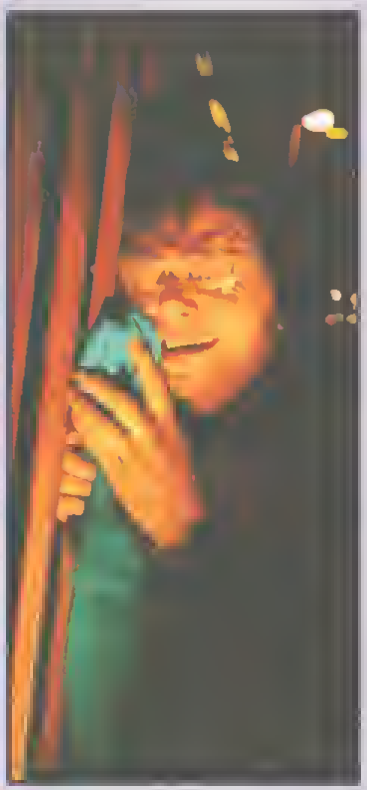
Anxious to svoid accueatione of seneationaliem, Fhiona'e cool directorial spproach conspires to keep viewers at a distsnce. 't wsnted to keep the audience on the outside. t didn't wsnt to be guilty of involving the audience in maee murder. That'e why I made a conecioue decieion not to use any music, which might draw sudiences in emotionslly. And the camere was largely static and unobtrueive, ueing long takee reminiecent of Hitchcock'e ROPE.'

'There are no big ehock eequencee. Little things became fsscinsting to me. Things tbst probably eeem mundane. Like the kettle boiling on the eame stove where the killer hss boiled the severed hesd of one of hie victime. We eee him eating and eleeping in the eame place as the corpse, and having a bath. In fact somehow the trivial thinge made the gore side seem comic. I would bave been happy not to show the murdere st all, but of courae that ie what faecinatee people. The prese attention wss put on whst he did to the bodies after he killed them, snd not the taking of life. The detalle ARE incredlbly fsscinsting, but to me they psle in comparison with the fact that these young men WERE living snd now sre not.'

One of the more controvereial aspects of the film ie ite graphic depiction of March/Nilsen'e eleazy homoeexual lifeetyle, shown in unflinching detail in grubby scenes of drug-tsking, casusl pickups in gente toilete and joyleee vieite to prostitutes. 'The censor wss more offended by these scenes thsn the taking of life,' sighs Fhions. 'They dldn't think there wss anything gross about murder! The actore were uncomfortable with the homosexusl scenes, but when you're filming you tend to get into a momentum, and halfway through the film you can get them to do whstever you want!'

The rigours of directing took their toll on the final day of shooting when Fhions's sppendix buret and she was carted off to hospital. That waen't her only problem. 'Being so young made it difficult for me to command respect, or even attention st times. Being female was aleo difficult. And of couree it was diffilcult becauee of tbe eubject matter and because I had no training. But t knew exactly whst l wsnted, and it all worked out very well in the end. I look back and think that if I eurvived all thoee difficultiee on my firat film then I can handle the eecond one eaeily.'

THE COLO LIGHT OF OAY went on to win a prize at the Venice Film feetival where according to Fhiona, 'At leaet a quarter of the audience walked out, but the people who remsined stood up and applsuded afterwarde. They either loved it or they hated it, which was great. Tbere can't be a better compliment for s young



filmmaker...'

UK sudiences will hsve s chance to judge for themeelvee when the film goes out on limited relesse next month. In the meantime Fhiona ie working on her next project, which she says is slso bound to upset s few people. 'The working title is BAD MOTHER, GOOO LAY. Basicslly the etory goes thst s woman wants to kill her hueband, eo ehe createe a myth thst there ie a eerial killer eo ehe can pin it on him. It will be a black comedy, t'm aleo hoping to do a vereion of MACBETH, in Gaellic, with subtitlee. Could thie be coneidered a commercial sellout? She grine mie-chievously. 'No comment!'



PRINTS OF DARKNESS

John Brosnan reviews new books by Mark Morris, Dan Simmons and Dean R Koontz.

The long shadow of Stephen King looms over most of the books featured in this month's column. Is this good or bad? Well, I'm a fan of King myself and on the whole his influence on the borror genre has been a good thing if the horror novels in this month's batch are anything to go by. The drawback is that you get the strong impression that the various writere are all drewing from the same creative well, with the result that their novels share common themes and imagery. For exsmple, of the four new books here by American writers children figure prominently ln the stories very much in the Stephen King msnner. And, of course, the publishers are eager to stress the Stephen King connection: on the cover of Randall Boyll's *After Sundown* (Corgi, £3.99) the blub goes, "The Most Horrifying Novel Of Snowbound Terror Since Stephen King's *The Shinning*".

The death of a child is the catalyst for the plot in *After Sundown*; two families who are neighboure are very close to each other and when the six year old daughter of one of them is killed in sn accident they decide, after the funeral, to escape to a cabln ln a remote mountaln ares to try snd come to terms with their mutal grief. Thls ls not s good idea. Very bad things have happened in the vicinity of the cabin in the past and history starts to repeat ltself. The two fsmilies only realize they're in serious trouble when they attempt to leave the cabln – snd dlscover that the trail through the trees that they drove up only a couple of days before has disappeared...and the trees are also beginning to crowd ln towsrds the cabin.

After that the body-count mounts up a to rate last seen in *Evil Dead* and very soon there's just one of the fathers left, and his young son, Ricky. It turns out that Ricky is the hub of all the bizarre happenings, which involve reincarnation, cannibilism and a deranged Earth spirit. I wouldn't describe *After Sundown* topnotcb borror – the plot depends too much on coincidence – but it had a good strangle-hold on me whlle I was reading it and what more can you ssk for?

No mention of Stephen King on the cover of *The Cartoonist* by Sean Costello (Pan, £3.99) but take a look at the author's acknowledgements: after thanking a whole mob of people for their help, including his mother, brother etc, he ends with, "And finally, Stephen King, who stood by me at the junction of Knight's Hill Road and Route 302 and gave me the best advice a pro could give a beginner: 'Read a lot and write a lot; it really works.' Thanks Steve. It worked." Did it? Well, okay, I've got to admit that *The Cartoonist* ls pretty good if a bit predictable. It's about this successful psychistrist, Scott Bowman, who has a beautiful wife, Krista, and delightful 10 year old daughter Kath. He loves them both very deeply so right off we know he's due for some very heavy crap concerning them.



We already know from the prologue that he has a black secret in his past; when he wss s medical student he'd been lnvolved in s hit-and-run sccident that killed a small girl out ln some remote rural area. He had been the driver of the car. So when s weird old man turns up at the hospital where Bowman is working snd starts producing some drawings that appear for foreshadow events in Bowman's life we automatically know there must be some connection between the dead girl and the old man. And towards the end of the book we find out what it is, but by thst time Bowman is going through hell, with his wife dead and his daughter in the grip of a mysterious illness. Curiously, unlike all the other horror books covered in the column this month, Evil comes out the clear winner in *The Cartoonist*.

A change of pace for T.M. Wright with

PRINTS OF DARKNESS

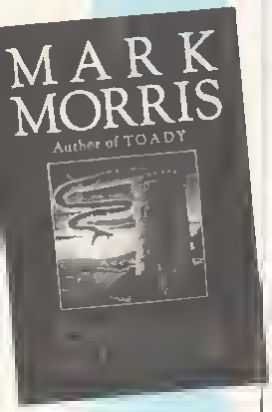


his latest novel, *The Place* (Gollancz, £3.99). His previous three novels all dealt with ghosts, or rather, the Dead, and the message in all three of them was that being dead wasn't much fun. I admired these books rather than enjoyed them but with *The Place* Wright has gotten away from his usual depressing theme and I found the results much more satisfying. It revolves around an eight year old girl who is downright weird – she is highly intelligent but very self-centred and, at times, an annoying bret. She also spends a lot of time in her own personal world – the 'place' of the title – which turns out to be just as real as this reality. It seems she possesses special powere but she is not unique; similar god-like powers are also possesssed by a raving loony called Harlan DeVries. He is aware of her existence and anxious to dominate her so that he can live on through her, so first he kidnaps her parents and her younger brother and her nightmare begins. Above averege stuff. I wouldn't go as far as Stephen King who, in a typical piece of blurby hyperbole, says on the jacket of *The Ploce*, "Wright is 'A Rare And Blazing Talent" but I do agree that Wright is somthing out ot the ordinary as horror writers go.

In a recent poll of horror writers in the Observer colour magazine Mark Morris cited Ramsey Campbell as his favourite horror author (Campbell came out overell favourite from the 9 writers canvassed) and I guess I can detect Campbell's influence in Morris's latest novel *Stitch* (Piatkus, £13.99) but the overwhelming influence remains that of Stephen King (and, like King, Morris likes to write very long books). *Stitch* has echoes of *It* and *The Tommyknockers*, among other King novels but at the same time Morris has an authorial voice all of his own, and like Campbell's, it is very much an English one.



Stitch is set in a fictional univereity, Maybury, somewhere in north England. A group of students there have become the target for a malign creature known as Mr Stitch who spreads a kid of spiritual and physical corruption among them. I enjoyed it – Morris is a deft hand at pulling off bravure horror set-pieces – but at the end I realized there was something missing. Unlike all the other horor novels I've read recently there is no *rationole* for what occurs in the book: Morris doesn't offer any explaination as to why Stitch has picked this particular university or these particular students. This may be deliberate on Morris's part – who needs *rationole* for an atack of pure Evil? – but I'm afraid the novel seems seriously flawed as a result.



There's a *rationale* in Dan Simmon's strangely similar *Summer of Night* (Healdine, £14.95); at the heart of all the terrible goings-on in the small Illinois town of Elm Haven is the huge bell sealed up in the tower of the town's gothic monstrosity of a school building. *Summer of Night* has strong echoes of King's *It*, in that a group of pre-adolescent kids are at the centre of the plot and adults, though present, are only marginal charecters –

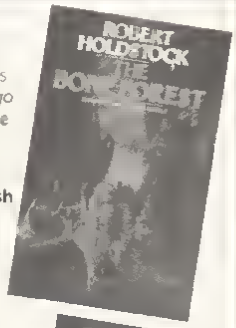
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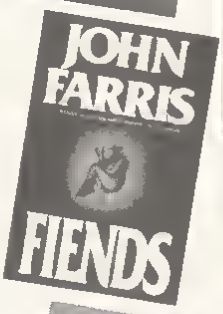


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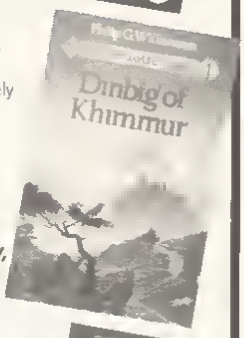
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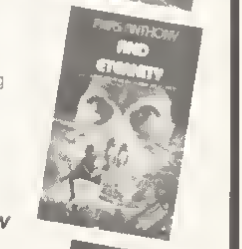
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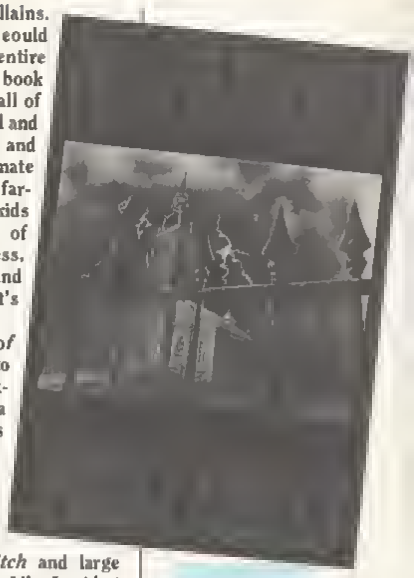
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with the exception of the villains. I enjoyed this one a lot – I could say it's my favourite of the entire bunch. It's a kind of kids' book for grown-ups – it utilises all of the major fears of childhood and I liked the way that school and teachers represent the ultimate evil. And it may be too far-fetched in the way that the kids develop incredible degrees of ingenuity and resourcefulness, take on the forces of evil and rout them completely but it's all great, cathartic fun.



I said that *Summer of Night* was strangly similar to *Stitch* and it's true: for example both novels feature a creature whose mouth turns into an extended proboscis when he attacks his victims and who also discharges worm-like creatures from it that burrow into said victims (small snakes in *Stitch* and large slugs in *Summer of Night*). Like I said at the start of this column, horror writers are all drawing from the same creative well (one sunk by Mr King) these days so it shouldn't be surprising that we get the occasional overlapping of horror imagery in different novels.

No sign of King's influence in Dean R. Koontz's *Night Chills* (Headline, £14.95). As was the case with a previous Koontz novel that I reviewed last issue, I was halfway through this one before I'd realised I'd read it before. And, yes, a check on the copyright date revealed I'd been caught out like this before: this is a reprint of a novel originally published here in 1977. This is the one about the people who have developed a drug that allows total mind control through subliminal advertising. Their long-term plan is to use it to take over Kuwait, of all places, but first they test it on a small rurel, town in New England. The scheme goes wrong when the scientist who invented the drug gives way to his preverted sexual desires and starts takling advantage of the women In the town. The situation rapidly gets out of control, the bodies start to pile up, the consipracy is exposed and the bad guys get their just desserts.

It's an okay read but Koontz has improved a bit since then; he doesn't rely any longer on the type of sick sex scenes that permeate *Night Chills*, though on the minus side his books have got increasingly longer over the years (this one is mere 334 pages). But then, as I've said before, Koontz is not one of my favourite horror writers.

Finally, a brief mention for a lone science fiction novel, *Time for the Stars* by Roberl Heinlein (VGSF, £3.99). This Is also a reprint, having originally been published in 1956, but weil worth a look at. If you only knew Robert Heinlein from the huge, unwieldy, self-indulgent books that he produced in the later years of his life you will find it a revelation to read *Time for the Stars*, written at the time when Robert Heinleln *was* science fiction.

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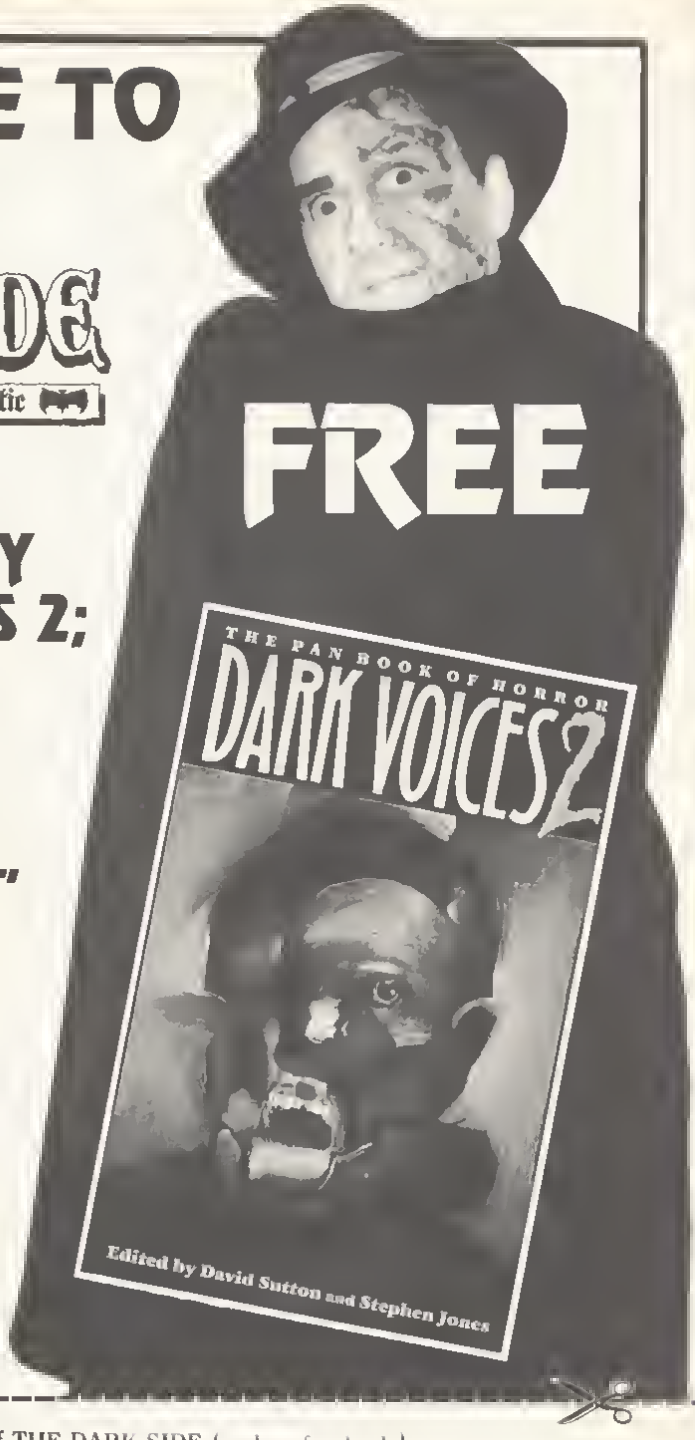


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Horrors of Toledo

A continuation of Poe's PIT AND THE PENDULUM by Geoffrey A. Dudley

When the French army esptured Toledo and Gensral Lasalls rescusd ms from ths horrore of ths pit and that slashing blade, I must have fainted at ths vsry momant of my dsliverancs. On recovsring my sanses, I opensd my eyes to gaze into those of my wifs, whosa loving countenance was clouded with anxiety.

"Oh, thank you God you've survivedi" Sha uttered the words with ths dapth of sincerity that I knew her to be capabls of. Her gantls hands stroked my face and brow and the cooloess of thsir touch refreshed my weary senses and aching limbs.

"The nightmare is at an end," she assured me, and after my experisncss of ths past few days I was ready to bslievs her.

Generel Lasalle entered the apartment in which I lay and which I assumsd to be a room in his hsadquarters.

"Wsll, my frisnd, you've recovered," hs said in his gsnial manner. "Do you think you are weil enough to stand? Here, let me give you my arm."

I gladly rose from my bed. I foood that I had more strength than I expected and the sffort exhausted me very littls.

I thanked him profussly for my dsliverancs from ths cellar dungaon whsre my tormsntors of ths Inquisition had imprisonsd ms. Thsir devillsh devices seemsd but a distant msmory to a mind that was rejoicing in its freedom and restoratlon to ths loving bosom of my wifs.

I turosd to hsr. "Catsrina, lst us go. I am strong snough now. I have work to do." I did not tell her what the work was. A plan was maturing in my fevered brain. I decided to keep it to myself until we arrived home.

Ws bid goodbye to my rescusrs and stspped out of ths building into ths fresh air of a May moroing replete with a sky flscked with the tiniest of white clouds. Ah, how nature's benevolence contrasts with the sadistic brutality of man! I thought of the tortures I had suffered and made a mental resolve that those responsible for them should not go unpunished.

The azure sky that predicted a day of spiendour contrastsd, too, with the desolation that I saw around ms. The city had not been taken without a great deal of destruction inflicted upon its buildings and thsir inhabitants. The signs of thls were to ba sesn on every hand. The corpsas of slain soldiers both Spanish and French were strewn among the rubble of dsvastated houses. A horrid stench was bsginning to pervada ths air.



Illustrated by Kip Kevallerez

Hastening through the shattsred streats, wa had ths great good fortuna to find that the structure of our own home was undamaged, and the house had suffsred only from ths looting that is an inavitable accompaniment of warfare betwesn bitter snsmies.

At supper in our kitchen that evening my tortured brein was still pondering what I proposed to do. Hesitatingly I confided it to Caterina. I expected that after what I had gone through she would approve, but shs sssmsd strangsly reluctant.

"Don't think of it," shs plsaded. "Let us go away into the country where we can llva in peacs. Ws've seen enough of the horrors of Toledo."

"But we *must* think of it," I replied. "They must bs taught an snduring lsson that will serve as a grim warning to others of thsir kind."

"Tha war is over. We should put it bshind us and start to rebuild our lives alsewhere. Coms with me to your fellow recusants. They will shslter and cere for you until you are fully recovered."

But I remainsd unconvinced that that



was what I wanted to do at this importsnt stage in the events of my embittered lifs. We retired to our bedroom but it was s long time before sleep overtook my restless mind.

The next morning I left the house snd made my way bsck to the General's headquarters. There I sske him for the sddress of tbe prison where the priests who had been my judges were incarcarated. He did not know it, such was the confused stste of affaire existing in the city. But he promised to track them down for me. It wss a week or two before he succeeded. In tbe meantime my impatience led me to call on him every day to see if there were any news. Finally I was rewarded witb the details that I sought.

The Governor of the prison received me civilly. Neither be nor Generel Lasalle was s sympstbiser with the Inquisition, but their hstred was nothing compsred with my own. I showed the Governor the written authority that General Lasalle had given me. As I did so, I noticed an instrument lying on his desk. I identified it as the kitchen knife which I had snatched up hurriedly st the time of my arrest and concealed about my person. It had been taken from me when my clothing was exchanged for the rough garment of coarse serge thst the Inquisitore provide for their hapless victims. Tbe Governor hsnded it to me witb a sardonic smile.

We descended a stone staircase which led to the cells, expecting to encounter the three blsck-robed monsters who had condemned me, but only two were found to be alive. The thlrd had hanged himself with a strip of cloth tnrn from his owo cloak. The remaining two were manscled, dragged upstaire, and bundled into a cart. They msde a sorry sight. How tyrannical they had been when the awesome power of the Inquisition lsy behind tbeir every word and action! What snivelling cowards they showed themselves to be in the ignominy of defeat and capture!

The cart came to s halt outside the dungeon where I had suffered the indescribable tortures of the pit snd the pendulum. The soldiere who had accompanied me escorted my prisonere down to the callar, where they left me alone with these wretched judges.

Taking out the knife, I slid it into the fat belly of the younger of the two men. He collspsed in a heap and I kicked his inert form over the edge into the pit. He went shrieking to his gbsstly deatb smong the rets, where I boped he would survive long enough for them to eat him alive as they had tried to eat me.

On the finger of the older priest I observed a ring thst wss as fsmiliar to me as the knife that I had recovered from the Governor's desk. It wss s diamond ring that Csterins had owned snd that had been stolen from ber when I was srrested. I wrenched it from his hand. Then, taking s stout piece of rope, I bound him to the low framework of wood upon which but latterly I had lain. He struggled with all the strength tbat remained to him after his cnnfinement. But his struggles were in vain and I easily subdued them.

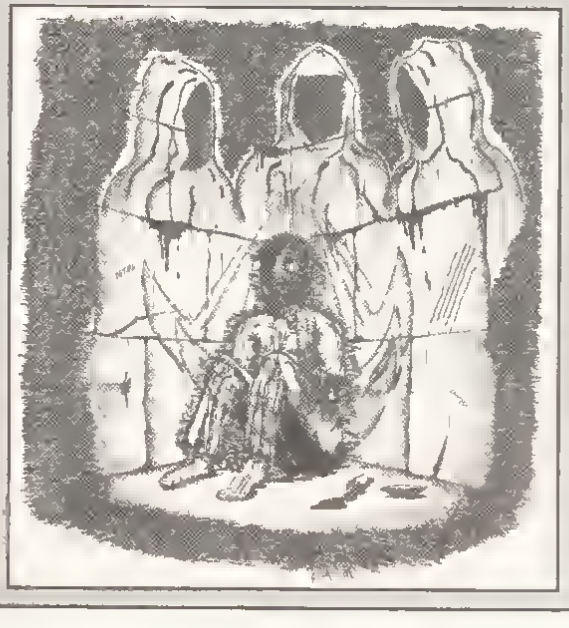
It did not need long to discover the infernal workings of the pendulum mechanism, and I set it in motion to begin its inexorable swing snd descent. When the terrifying blade touched the body, it would cut the priest's throat. But not too soon. I wanted him to experienca sll the tortures of the hell that be bad condemned me to.

I watched the glesming crescent as it *hissed* through the fetid air. Fascinsted, I stared st the hideous painting thst from a panel in tbe celling intensified the ghastliness of the scene. It was the skeletsl figure of Time holding whst I had originally supposed to be the pictured imsge of a huge pendulum but which I now knew to be the actual pendulum sttached to the dresd blsde.

Then suddenly tbe door of the dungeon burst inwsrds as troops whose identity I recognised only too well invsded the cellar. I uttered a shrill despairing cry of protest at the ironic injustice that had overtaken me. Why, oh why, had I not heeded Caterins's pleading to seek a safe haven in the countryside? It wss now too late. The Spaniards had retaken the city and my fate was in their svenging hands.

The advsnce of the living was supported by an onslaught from the living dead. From tbe pit of hell rose the priest whom I had slain with the knife, the rets still clinging to the hslf-eaten carcass. And then horror of horrors! The form on the wooden frsmework burst its bonds snd lurched towsrds me. The head hung down its back adhering to the body only by a strip of muscle, while from the severed neck thsre spurted s grest stresm of blood. Living and dead advancad towards me intent on destroying my very soul.

These events are as real to me ss snything that hss ever occnrred in my life. I find it hard to believe Caterins when sbe tells me that they never happened. But one thing I am sure of. I am now where she urged me to flee, for from my window I have watched the countryside in its vsrying moods as the seasons come and go. She assures me that the dungeon where I am eteroally tormented by my persecutors is no more than the cell of the lunatic asylum where she bas devotedly visited me every week for many s year. But I know better. For every time she comes I notice thst she is wearing the diamond rtng.



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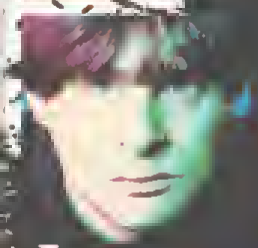
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